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THE VICTORY OF EZRY GARDNER

IMOGEN CLARK

Clark, J
NRS

"With the sweet expanse of the moors about them."
Page 92.

THE VICTORY OF EZRY GARDNER

BY

IMOGEN CLARK

"Not suffering, but faint heart,
is worst of woes."
LOWELL

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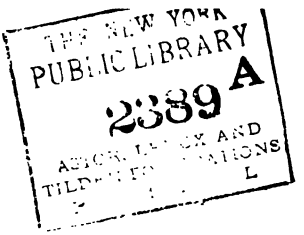

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ROCKWELL AND CHURCHILL PRESS
BOSTON

To

MY DEAR FRIEND

ROBERT COLLYER

THE VICTORY OF EZRY GARDNER.

I.

I know not any place
  So fair as this,
Swung here between the blue
  Of sea and sky.
    JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

EVERYBODY on the Island knew Gardner. Like those joyous, sylvan creatures who dwelt in the woods when Time was young, he was inextricably bound up with his surroundings. The bond between him and them was forged by love — love for the little common-place things — pebbles,

grasses, the wave breaking on the sandy shore, the flower beckoning like a star from the greenery. These were the delights of his simple heart. The barren spot, swept by every wind and beaten by the bitter brine for unknown centuries, was as fair in his sight as the Islands of the Blest.

The old town, rising in amphitheatrical dignity above the harbor, was like some wonderful dream-city to his untutored eyes. Its narrow, rambling streets widened to marvellous thoroughfares in his fancy, and the large, hospitable houses seemed fit homes for royalty itself. He gloried in the wharves where the stout ships lay moored after their long voyages to the lands over seas, whence they had brought back treasures to beautify the sleepy place. He was proud of everything there, though his home was on the other side of the Island, in the tiny

fishing-village huddled on the cliff in view of the vast expanse of water stretching between the New World and the Old.

But far deeper than the pride he felt in the handiwork of the Island's sons, was his affection for the land itself and for the great, rolling ocean that caressed and chafed its shores by turns. There was no sweeter music to his hearing than the voice of the sea.

"It's comp'ny fer me," he used to declare when old age had loosened his tongue, "an' I ain't never tired o' hearin' it. 'Pears ez ef it olluz hed suthin' to say. Sometimes it's takin' on an' lamentin' fer all them pore souls gone to Davy Jones' locker, an' sometimes it's angry an' lashin' itself inter a storm; an' ag'in it's sullen, an' ag'in it's sweet an' gentle like a mother singin' 'Sleep, my chil'!' It's like a

woman — it 's never quiet, an' ye can't mostly tell 'bout its moods. Wut ye expec' an' lay out fer it to be is jes' wut it never is. But it 's good comp'ny all the same. I know ef I wuz to die, an' they laid me away on the mainland ware the sound o' the sea 'd never come, thet I could n't rest quiet in my grave. No, sir-ee, w'en I go I want ter be put on the moors, an' then I 'll sleep sound till Jedgment Day!"

His love for the moors that lay between the town and the little fishing-village, linking the one to the other, was as strong as his passion for the sea. It had its roots in his innermost being. It was part of his life. He had wandered over them in all seasons — in storm and sunshine alike — and their wild beauty had sunk deep into his soul. He could not explain the feeling; he did not know that the great Mother held his

heart in her mighty hands and answered its needs in many ways. Nor did he understand the shibboleth of the summer people who invaded the Island in later years; it was meaningless jargon to him. "The restfulness and the immensity of the moors," "the lights and shades and tender gradation of color," were phrases that carried no weight to his slow mind. He did not comprehend the ecstasy that could break into words at the sight of some tiny, sweet-water pool gleaming amidst the tangle of weeds, like a mirror set in an emerald frame. He knew its whereabouts, and always glanced its way in passing as one seeks recognition from friendly eyes. The familiar object gladdened him vaguely, and the pagan in the man was stirred to some sort of worship by the beauty of the clear waters that held a bit of the heavens in their clasp.

Still the evident appreciation of the strangers pleased him in the main; their admiration for the things he loved touched an answering chord in his breast, though its vibrations found no outlet in speech. Their rapturous expressions were incomprehensible, and yet he realized that they were prompted by some charm in the downs which, to his way of thinking, were "oncommon sightly;" but the contemptuous terms of "lonesome" and "barren" awakened a dull resentment within him. Lonesome — never! More times than he could ever number he had found consolation on those plains and the company of sweetest sights and sounds.

From his earliest childhood he had leant on Nature's heart. Shy, dreamy, silent, he had lived his life apart from others. The sea, with its mighty voice eternally

responsive to some whisper without his world, brought him comfort. The level stretch of wind-swept land revealed her manifold beauties to his watching eyes. Not love the moors? — He were ungrateful else. He had seen them in all their aspects — flushed with the tender light of dawn — beautiful under the noon sun — radiant with the colors of the after-glow streaming far across the sky. The twilight had shrouded their familiar outlines from his view and the moon's magic had transformed them into a fairness beyond the gift of day. The soft greens of spring, the deeper hues of maturity, the flaunting splendors of autumn and the white glories of winter in turn appealed to him, and through every phase his love for the plains grew stronger.

They had no secrets from him. When

the clangor of wild geese filled the air in the early spring he felt intuitively that the long season of frost was over; he looked eagerly at the steady, wedge-like flight streaming northward across the sky, and, as the shrill clamors were shaken down, his heart bounded with joy. Later, when the blue-bird flashed its keen brightness in the sun, sounding its plaintive cry, — "Deary, oh, deary!" — he knew by some subtle summons that the trailing arbutus was spreading its faint fragrance abroad and hastened gladly to its haunts. The soft south wind breathed its message to the slumbering flowers, and at the word of command — *Ephphatha!* — they raised their eyes and looked out upon the world.

What a paradise of beauty the moors became then to him! He hailed each new blossom with rapturous delight. In his

love for the tender, growing things he was one with Keats — poor Keats! — who told his faithful Severn in those sad last days in Rome that he thought his intensest pleasure had been to watch the growth of the flowers. There was some faint bond of kinship between the richly dowered son of Genius and that other — timid, illiterate, voiceless as he was — the child of that bleak Island off the chill New England shore. They both loved Nature and waited upon her, — the one with words which have become the world's pride, the other with a mute but fervid worship.

No tiniest flower that was not dear in Gardner's sight — he viewed them all with fond impartiality! The Blackberry blossoms in bridal white, the little, golden stars of the Arnica plant gleaming in the grass-grown furrows, the homely Yarrow every-

where in profusion, the feathery clusters of Wild-Carrot like "delicate pats of snow-flakes," the Dandelions, the sweet-scented Clover, and the scarlet Pimpernel. That little flower, with its wonderful wisdom, seemed more than human to him — he had known it all his life by its common name of "Poor-man's weather-glass." As a boy he had consulted it whenever there was a prospect of childish sport in store for him, kneeling before it to ask with bated breath, "Will it rain?" The Pimpernel never failed him — never withheld its knowledge obtained by laws which we cannot question, but must recognize as infallible. How wise it was! Often, when there was no cloud in the blue, it would clasp its small, red petals together, hiding its golden heart in safety from the shower that never tarried in its coming.

Summer after summer he watched the different blooms on the moors and by the swamps. He saw the little *Housatonia* whiten the roadside at one time, and later the *Hudsonia* gild the plain. The purple *Geradia*, the yellow Aster, and the Indian bean nodded familiarly to him from their accustomed places, and as they drooped away the Golden-rod appeared in all its manifold variety, and the fringed Gentian that told him truly the year was hastening to its close.

Did other people turn to their almanacs to learn the name of the month? He could tell you without the aid of the printed page. He knew that October was at hand when the Huckleberry bushes flamed crimson and the Life-everlasting stood amid the yellowing grasses as if to decorate the grave of summer — fit emblem that seems to hold "some-

thing of immortality in the sad, faint sweetness lingering long in its lifeless petals."

Gardner spoke of them all as "a passel o' weeds," but the phrase was one of endearment rather than of contempt. He rejoiced over them secretly, and his keen sight detected many beauties not always perceptible save to sympathetic eyes.

Nor was he deaf to the music to be heard on the moors no matter what the season might be. The sweet sounds of multiform life, the hum of myriads of hurrying insects, the faint tinkle of the sheep-bells half-muffled in wool, the crop — crop of many little mouths, and the soft rustle in the herbage; the chirping of birds, the hoot of an owl, or the occasional cry of a loon flying by in the gathering dusk, — he had ears for them all, and for the ocean that glittered on the horizon by day or lay unseen in the

darkness clasping the little Island on its mighty breast.

But though Nature unfolded her secrets to his eyes, though she spoke with many tongues to his heart, binding it closer to her, it yet remained shut to his kind. Nor were there any stirrings within him towards a better life, nor any longings for a higher worship than that afforded by the land and sea. He bent his knee to the flowers, but he knew nothing of the Hand that strews the earth with their loveliness. His soul thrilled to the voice of the sea, but he did not heed its Maker, who has proscribed the bounds which its wildest fury cannot encroach.

II.

When the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet — both tug —
He 's left, himself, in the middle: the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!
Never leave growing till the life to come!

ROBERT BROWNING.

IT was long before Gardner became aware that his sphere, humble though it was, contained some element of usefulness. Life brought with it no stern realization of its responsibilities, he was content to lead an existence from day to day as heedless as that of the lower animals. He was aroused

from his dreamy speculations by an imperious voice from the outer world which stunned even while it thrilled him with its momentous significance.

The news of the attack upon Sumter struck sharply across his self-absorption, wrenching him with mighty force from his narrow, introspective ways. His timid nature experienced a shock which left him bruised and broken. Uncertain, apprehensive, halting in speech, he knew not where to turn.

The ominous signal for the beginning of that struggle which lasted for so long and dark a period, was heard throughout the world. It was like an alarum-bell awakening men from the torpor of indifference. The little Island was in a tremulous state of excitement; the natives listened in suspense to the direful message, their stanch

hearts stirred to righteous indignation. Each felt the insult to the country's flag as one offered to his own manhood. And the spirit of Freedom, that was as dear to the simple folk as the breath of their beloved sea, thrilled them with tenderest pity for their brethren bearing the weight of chains.

The President's call for aid came upon this tumult of feeling like a divine opportunity to lend a hand. It did not appeal in vain at those humble homes! A goodly number of volunteers responded to their country's demand that first time; there were scarcely any men left on the Island. Only a few whose days of active service were over and whose stories of dangers encountered upon the seas lost all interest in this new era of suspense. The boys, who had once delighted in such eloquence, turned impatiently away now. The past

held no further charm for them; the present alone engrossed their attention, and their young souls chafed at the slowness of Time that condemned them to inactivity and home life. The "walks" on the houses were deserted; no anxious eye strained seaward for a glimpse of a sail on the horizon. Husbands, brothers, lovers were gone to the mainland, and their return was shrouded in mists which no loving sight could penetrate.

Gardner was among the handful that had remained behind, though he was not incapacitated by either age or illness. He was in the forties then, his small figure bent from work in his dory and drudgery on shore, his face lined from exposure to the weather; but his hair still showed black against his old, felt hat and his step retained some of the buoyancy of youth.

Had he gone with the others, save or the promiscuous "fa'rwells" heard on all sides, no nearer voice would have trembled with parting words. There would have been no kisses and clinging arms for him, hindrances to going, though God knows how dear they are, and how blank the emptiness is without them. A strong hand-grip for the boy in blue — not for the old companion — a careless nod — and he would have slipped away and no one would have missed him.

His staying was of little consequence. If any of his neighbors considered it strange that he had not leaped to help his country, the thought was silenced the next moment by the admission that such as he could be of little service. He was held in scant esteem. His bent figure with its shambling gait was a familiar object to

the inhabitants of town and village alike, but it never inspired any kindlier feeling than that of indifference. They knew him for a shy, honest man, rather a good hand in the cod season, but not a true sailor. Perhaps that latter fact had much to do with their insensibility to his merits.

In a place where all the men follow a seafaring life, as naturally as a duck takes to water, the standard of excellence is not far to seek. Gardner's love for the ocean, however, reached its full limit on the shore, where he could watch its varying moods. It was an indisputable fact that he had never gone "down to the sea in ships;" handy with his oar and small sail, the fishing-grounds near home had offered him his only experience of a sailor's life.

His dreamy ways were incomprehensible to his companions, though some suggested,

in kindly explanation, that he was "wanting," accompanying the word with a significant gesture. And, indeed, that seemed to many the best interpretation of his character. One, surely, could impute but little sense to a man who found his pleasures in straying alone over the moors, or in lingering on the beach for hours watching the rolling waves. With no women-folk in his home, the ties of sociability did not bind him to other hearths, nor did he meet his neighbors in their religious life. He was not a church-going man. No one understood him. This lack of comprehension was not because of any complexity in his character; he made no demands upon others. He was bound in by his own shy nature.

When his comrades, with their faces glowing with patriotism, had gone forth

to give their lives if need be, their strength surely, for the great cause, he crept back to his little, low house by the sea, shutting the door upon himself and his misery. There, with no other voice near him but the mighty one he loved, he confessed to himself his reason for staying.

He was afraid! Afraid! Afraid of what? — Of charging men, of flying bullets, of the cannon's deadly roar, and all the sights and sounds of warfare. His fancy pictured distorted, monstrous shapes that haunted him waking and sleeping; his heart was full of dread which his ignorance could not surmount. The sense of danger which nerved the others to do their utmost left him powerless. He had no knowledge to act as an antidote to fear, no courage to meet the demand his country made upon him, no pity to

spare from his own self-concentration for the cause of the oppressed. But safe in his own home fear still held him, — the fear that his neighbors would discover his cowardice. All through the days and months and years he hugged his shameful secret close. Shut away as he was from his kind, self-centred and diffident, one of the dominant feelings of his life was that he should not lose caste in his little village.

From time to time news from the outside world came to the waiting ones on the Island — news of the dead and dying, of the living, and the grim struggle still going on. Gardner listened to the different accounts with a pathetic look on his deep-lined face; he spelled out the records in the newspapers and tried to give his fainting heart courage. Night after night he lay awake planning to join

his countrymen, and when the daylight crept back it found him still irresolute. "P'r'aps to-morrer," he would say with white lips. But the morrow would come and slip away, bringing no deeper sense of bravery, and putting off his decision to an indefinite future.

The mere struggle within himself — could he have known it — was in a measure a proof that somewhere within his being the spark of valor was lighted, though it flickered but feebly. After all, our truest worth is not so much in the success we achieve, as in the endeavors we make towards its achievement. The man of indomitable courage who can say with the youthful Nelson, "Who is Fear? I never met him," — though he gain the cross for bravery, is not so deserving of praise as the poor wretch palpitating with dread, who longs, with all

his soul, to flee from danger and yet stands true to his post. Somewhere, though not in this world, that struggle is seen and estimated aright.

But Gardner, — fighting single-handed with his fears, — weak, vacillating, conscious of his own shortcomings, was a miserable creature. Those months of self-torture aged him perceptibly. He frequented the old town daily, seeking information in the tavern or the street from old and young alike. When the boat came in from the Mainland he was the first on the wharf to greet her arrival. And when the Town-crier, bristling with importance, started up the street with his bell slipped under his arm and both trembling hands holding the paper near his eyes, Gardner pressed close at his side listening to the words as they tumbled out in quick, disjointed tones; "Victory! "—

"Defeat!" — "Terrible loss of life!" — while the women and children crowded close in suffocating eagerness, their white faces quivering with fear and hope. The news once learned, Gardner would turn aside and trudge back over the lonely moors thinking — thinking —

At last there came a night when he hesitated no longer. Suddenly, decisively, the little spark of valor flamed up into a mighty blaze and swept his fears away with its consuming breath. He was like one born anew. His small figure seemed alive with courage. It had taken him a long time to reach a decision — weeks, months, years — but he *would not* hold back now. He would serve his country! And with that determination stirring within him, he opened his door, guiltless of lock or bolt, and let himself out into the waking world.

It was almost morning. He hurried through the quiet lane where the houses were ranged like the lads and lasses in a contra-dance, the regularity of the lines broken here and there by the nearer approach of several of them to the opposite side as if they were more eager than the others for the sport to begin. The little street was unconscious of the new creature stumbling along its grass-grown centre. The quaint, squat houses with their roofs sloping almost to the ground had seen him often before. Outwardly he was not changed, though it seemed to his excited fancy that the difference in his feelings must make some corresponding difference in his appearance. He left the sleeping homes behind him and hastened down the bluff, never pausing until the beach was reached, then he stood still and looked about.

It was early summer, and the air, despite its keen saltness, was very mild; it might even be hot by noon. The sky was still dark, but away off on the eastern horizon there was a soft band of light that seemed to hold the heavens in its clasp like a girdle. The ocean was a black, quivering mass creeping up the beach, receding, creeping up again — restless and tossing like some great creature in agony.

Gardner ploughed his way through the deep sand, looking down half reverently. A gull flew past him with a shrill cry out over the lonely stretch of water, straight to the silvery sheen of the dawning day. Gardner followed its flight with his eyes, and, as he looked, the delicate gray trembled and palpitated with the breath of a new life; it grew warmer, mellower, and melted slowly into a tender glow of gold with faint

tremulous touches of rose. The far-off waters flashed white, though near at hand they were still dark.

It all seemed so wonderful to the silent, untutored man. He had watched the morning's coming often before, but it had never affected him as it did at this moment. He could not take his eyes off the beautiful strip of light that grew momentarily wider and brighter and deeper — that stretched out mighty fingers athwart the whole sky and grasped the darkness, dispelling it with a touch. It was as if the Voice that had given the command at the birth of the world had said again, "Let there be light!" and His messengers were spreading the good tidings throughout the land.

Then, on a sudden, the sun rose, illuming the whole scene — and it was day! It was day also in that man's soul. The

mists of selfishness and worthlessness rolled aside, as the mists were scattered about him, and the words that had thrilled the world at its beginning found an echo within him. And it was light!

He stood there for some time, heedless of everything, until he was recalled to every-day life by the approach of several fishermen. He returned their greetings half-shamefacedly. In that moment of spiritual awakening, which he barely comprehended, he wanted to be by himself — alone — and not alone. The companionship of his fellows jarred upon him. He went slowly back to his home and made his simple preparations for departure.

That day's steamer bearing a few recruits to the Mainland numbered Gardner amongst them. He stood apart from his comrades, in the stern, watching the Island recede

from sight — silent as usual — his face still aglow with the strange, exalted look that had come to it in the early dawn and his heart beating high with the elation of self-conquest.

III.

The brave makes danger opportunity;
The waverer, paltering with the chance sublime,
Dwarfs it to peril.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

IT is a sad thought that we never keep true to the pitch of our highest endeavors — somewhere the tension slackens — somewhere the note strikes false — and jarring discords creep in, drowning the sweeter sounds. We can only linger for a little time upon the heights; the fine air is too difficult to breathe long, and slowly, — reluctantly we descend to the plains and the mists and take up our round of duties again. We

come back with faces shining from our interview with the Presence revealed in the burning bush, but it is seldom that we retain that brightness to glorify the commoner moments and struggles of our lot. The splendor vanishes, but who shall say that we are not the better for having seen its radiance, even if it never touches us again? Our living, poor as it is, yet thrills often to the nobler strain, though we are unconscious of it as we settle down to "the C-major of this life" — the prosaic key-note to which most of our lives are set.

Gardner's exaltation was but a passing phase. Each revolution of the steamer's wheels filled him with apprehension. His soul was sick with dread. He had never been away from the Island save on short fishing expeditions, and knew nothing of the

world at large. It seemed a fearful thing to him to go out into it now to join those fighting men. He was steeped in bitterness.

But the strength which he had gained in those months of self-examination did not wholly desert him. He would not go back, he told himself grimly; he would fight for his country, die for her if need be. The words seemed like bravado to his tortured soul, but he said them again and again, as if the mere repetition could give him courage. Perhaps the late flower of his patriotism had only blossomed under the light of envy, for it was true that he longed to prove himself as brave as his neighbors; he had no higher standard and no consciousness of love or duty that could furnish him with one. Faint and timorous he joined the regiment with the other recruits and

accustomed himself awkwardly to the work required of him.

He was in service three months before he saw the real horrors of war, and every day, in the dread of a possible battle, he felt his purpose grow weaker until he dared not trust himself alone. His waking nights were haunted with fear, and shadows struck terror to his very soul. His ignorance pictured — he knew not what. Truly, "the danger of dangers is illusion!" He sought the companionship of other men constantly now, and lingered by the campfire listening drearily to their stories and songs. He watched their stern faces grow tender as they bent over home-letters and noticed — he who had always been so blind — the tears that glistened in their eyes when the mail brought some loving scrap of news. Once, he told himself bitterly, that

if he could receive some such message his courage would be the better, his manhood the nobler. But none ever came. The hand of love had never touched his lonely life; he had not felt any need for it before; now, he longed wearily for some one to understand him!

When the orders came to push on, he stood ready in line, inwardly trembling though he bore a bold front. His glance read the intense excitement on the faces of the other men, alert and eager for action, and he tried to simulate their feelings. He was swept on in the charge sick at heart. His fear of the rattling shot about him was not so keen as the fear he had of himself. He felt the impulse strong within him to turn and flee — anywhere, anywhere. His brain whirled with the thought. But the dread of the disapproval of others struck

him sharp like a blow and kept him at his post, wavering, inefficient, but still where Duty bade him stay.

What would they say to see him flee, those men who had known him all his life, and with whom he marched shoulder to shoulder? Macy there, with whom he had strayed over the distant moors in the far-away time of his childhood, or Coleman, who had been his partner on many fishing expeditions? He had taken his life in his hands often when they were at the mercy of wind and wave, and had felt no particular dismay. He could not express even to himself, that the man with the blood of sailor ancestors in his veins has no dread of the sea and its moods, though he knows — none better — of the disasters that have befallen the many who have intrusted their lives on its waters.

The ocean was like a second mother to him, one whom he loved with his whole being so deeply and truly that all fear was cast aside.

But this unknown land was different. The strangeness of his surroundings frightened him, the ghastliness of the strife appalled him. Not even the excitement of the onslaught could buoy up his treacherous courage. He was jostled here and there like a man of straw, his musket swayed helplessly in his nerveless grasp, but he was spared the ignominy of desertion. He came back unharmed from that storm of shot and shell.

After that experience he was in three other battles, and in each he felt the same benumbing terror, though no one discovered his pitiful secret. In the midst of battle men do not stop to question the feel-

ings of their companions. Their whole attention is centred on the duty before them, and their eyes are only caught and held by some splendid show of valor that stirs them to emulation. The excitement that dominates the scene sweeps aside all other considerations. Home-thoughts rush into their minds for a moment, and then the strong love of overcoming and the intensity of the struggle leap up within them and they press forward to do their best.

Gardner was thankful that his "best" consisted in keeping at his post. He was far from giving himself even the credit of being "faithful in little things." It did not seem to him, in his self-abasement, that the little thing was a great one for him, since it held him true to his higher nature. He recognized his failures with uncompromising exactness. Soldiers such as he were

of no more worth than a child's tin toy! Nor did the small service which he rendered a comrade when the battle was over, fill him with any new sense of usefulness.

They told him Macy was dying and wanted to see some one from home; he did not hesitate a moment, but hastened to his companion and bent to receive the last messages for the wife and children far away. The simple words pained him inexpressibly. He tried to give some encouragement, but the man dying for his country seemed a different being from the friend of the old Island days. Gardner was strangely awed in his presence — Macy was a hero! — he bowed his head and great sobs shook his frame.

The wounded man stretched out his hand to comfort, while a little touch of pleasure that some one really cared about his going

thrilled him unspeakably. At home they all would have cared — Phœbe and the children — but away from them, hundreds and hundreds of miles, who would have thought that any one would shed a tear? It made the going easier! He had known Ezry Gardner all his life. They had trudged together to the old dame's school in Step lane as small children, and had hunted for roots and berries on the moors in play-time. When the scanty education was finished, they had often shared many an odd job on sea and shore, both as boys and men. They had always been good comrades, but there was no strong bond of affection between them; he had been more intimate with a dozen others.

The sight of Gardner's tears filled him now with compunction. He felt that he

had failed to respond to the demands a simple heart had made upon his own; he had amused others many times at Gardner's expense. Memory touched him at every turn. How often he must have misunderstood this companion! It all came to him in that one quick flash — childhood, youth, manhood, and home — the home he should never see again — the rolling downs — the glorious ocean. A sob choked in his throat, a great wave of regret swept over him as he realized that he could never atone to this man who was a tie between him and that old life.

"Never mind, mate," he gasped, "don't take it to heart. I'm sorry to go, 'count o' Phœbe an' the little uns, but I 'd do it ag'in — God knows I would — I 'm not grudgin' it. Tell 'em at hum I said so — tell 'em" — But what further message he

would send was silenced by the Great Mystery that placed a seal upon his lips.

Gardner stood, unconscious of time, looking down with misty eyes at the quiet face, his mind assailed with questions. Why had such a man been taken and he — the useless one — spared? There was no wife to mourn for him — there were no children to look for his coming and weep because that never could be, and then forget, as is the way of childhood — no one would miss him, were he lying in Macy's place! But the hero had fallen, and the other, whose only claim to heroism lay in his brotherhood to the dead man, or, so he told himself, remained unscathed.

Macy had left the world not comprehending the mood of the man who sobbed at his side; he had thought that sorrow had broken down the cold reserve with which so

many of his kind were hedged about. But it was not grief at the loss of his friend, nor sympathy for the desolation overshadowing the little home in Cliff street, that touched Gardner so deeply. He was quivering with excitement and haunted by nervous dread; the consciousness of his own shortcomings and his failure to do aught else but keep his secret struck him afresh. He wept for that as well as for the loneliness that debarred him from sympathy. Macy the hero would not have understood the shrinking, uncertain heart, any more than Macy the comrade would have comprehended any show of tenderness back there on the Island.

Friendship, with those simple people, found no expression in soft phrases of endearment, or in little loving ways. A gruff voice, a willing hand, and few words

formed the currency of their daily intercourse; demonstrativeness was entirely foreign to their natures. Even with their women — once the days of courtship were over, at which time affectionate terms were infrequent — the men were taciturn and grim.

Gardner came away from the burial of his friend strangely uplifted; some one, whom he had known intimately, had met death with unflinching spirit. The thought strengthened him like wine. His heart was filled with a courage which might have been transmitted to it by Macy, as the only thing he could give to requite his companion's tears. At that moment Gardner felt that he could go into action unshrinkingly and hold his own against the enemy, free from any warring doubts of his instability. He was not called upon,

however, to put these new-born feelings to the test. The battle where Macy fell was the last one in which Gardner's division took part. Shortly afterwards the news came that the war was at an end.

It was early spring, and the little town where the regiment was quartered was wrapped in the soft darkness of night. The air was sweet with the perfume of blossoms bursting into life in the gardens and on the hillsides. A mass of eager, excited men crowded around the telegraph-office trying to catch the sounds as they came over the wires, as if their untutored sense might grasp some meaning before the words were taken off by the trembling operator. When the message was complete it flashed out like fire and ran from mouth to mouth: "Richmond has fallen — the war is over!"

For the moment there was a tumult of noise, an indistinct murmur of excitement — undisturbed by any shout of elation — and then a great silence pressed down upon them all standing there, white-faced, wild-eyed, freed at last from the long strain of anxiety. Each one was filled with conflicting thoughts — thoughts of home, thoughts of dead comrades who must know the great result somewhere, somehow, and gladness and thankfulness on every side. In those first minutes of deep feeling, however, there were no words to express what would come torrent-like by and by from every lip.

Suddenly, from the outskirts of the crowd, there rose a tenor voice flinging out its sweetness on the night air with a reckless prodigality of force that would not spare even an iota of its beauty:

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

There was a slight — almost imperceptible — pause, then every heart responded, every head was bared, and every voice took up the words:

"Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

That hymn of thankfulness pierced to the listening stars. It rose triumphantly and swept to its grand climax until it seemed to be the very embodiment of gratitude. All the suffering, all the sorrow, the fears, the tears of those months and years of warfare found their way into those simple words. They quivered with feeling. And when the mighty "Amen" died away the air was

full of sobs. Strong men fell upon one another's necks and wrung one another's hands, unashamed of their emotion.

Some one seized Gardner's hand, a stranger, whose eyes had never caught a glimpse of the sea, but as truly his brother in that moment as if they both had been nourished at the same breast.

"Thank God, comrade!" he cried.

Gardner's fingers gripped the unknown hand firmly, and as the man turned away he echoed the words with an intensity of expression born of a feeling too deep for analysis. Then he crept apart with lowered head. He felt that he was in a holy place, that that Being to whom they had sung their praises was in their midst. He did not know that God is never very far from the heart to whom

mankind is dear. He knew nothing of God! And yet there were some faint stirrings within him of *His* omniscience and omnipresence — some gratitude that found utterance in his soul, though his lips only framed the trite phrase, "Thank God!"

IV.

Sometimes, just to have one's mood
Comprehended, is relief;
Simply to be understood
In one's sorrow, is a good
That avails to soften grief.

MARY E. BRADLEY.

GARDNER found no change in the Island on his return; it might almost have lain under the spell of some enchantment, so exactly did it correspond with the picture in his faithful memory. It had seemed to him that there would be a great difference. But Time had stood still in the little street; the houses were just the same and the people had not altered outwardly, though many of

them carried a bitter ache in their hearts that would only leave them at Death's bidding. The moors were the same and the ocean — the grand, changing ocean — was the unchanging friend of his life. He was glad to be back — glad he told himself, and he set about his old way of living, taking up the thread as if it never had been dropped.

His own experience had made a signal difference in his appearance. He came home an old man, though he bore no scars to account for the change. The constant battling with his feelings had worn upon him more than any hardships he had endured; insufficient fare, inclement weather, the fatigue of the march, were of no moment in comparison with the daily feuds he had waged with his fears. It was only natural that he should carry some evidence of those

struggles in his deep-lined face which was indescribably pathetic. His neighbors were justified in their verdict that "Ezry wuz gittin' on." They were not quick to recognize the waking soul in his glance; their keenness of comprehension was only sufficient for the outer man.

Gardner, however, was dimly conscious of some alteration within him, some longing which never grew into words, nor could ever grow, he thought. Contact with the world had widened his outlook and had made him more considerate of the feelings of those about him. The sight of the haunting horrors of the battlefield had filled him with a deeper wish to save pain where he could, and his own incompetency had humbled him into something better than the old Gardner had ever dreamed of being. But he was no analyzer of self; he felt the

change, and tried to exalt his simple living in some fashion. He was like one groping in the dark.

Shortly after his return he sought out Phœbe Macy and told her the few details of her husband's death. His halting description of the little scene was very unsatisfactory to him, but he was powerless to make it more vivid. With a painful diffidence he repeated the message which had burned itself indelibly upon his memory; the words were so real to him that he almost hesitated to give them utterance. It was like unveiling something holy. Then, the duty accomplished, he went his way. He never thought again of mentioning his dead comrade to the lonely wife; the loving depths of a woman's heart were unfathomed by him. He did not know how sweet it is to hear the daily mention of one who has

slipped out of the ranks of life, to keep in mind the little earthly likings for a flower, it may be, or for some trivial, homely matter — "So-and-so was fond of this!" — and love springs back over the lapse of days and years and the dear one's presence is felt anew. There is no darkness so impenetrable as that of forgetfulness. Let our dead be wrapped about with remembrance and they are not far removed from us, but once cover them with oblivion and they are lost forever.

If Gardner had only known how the sad-eyed woman longed for a constant repetition of those words which had become part of his life, he would not have passed her so quickly whenever they chanced to meet. Or if he could have guessed the pleasure it would give her to listen to the many little happenings of those months when he was

her husband's companion he would have willingly spent much time in their narration. And there was a great deal that he might have told, but he did not know — he did not understand.

As far as his other neighbors were concerned he had scarcely anything to say to them; never a talkative man, his late experience, instead of opening the floodgates of speech, seemed to impose silence on his part. He was not the only one of the Island volunteers to return. A mere sprinkling of those who had sailed away so confidently had come back, the most of them bearing gallant scars, a leg lost here, an arm lost there, but each poor stump glorified as with the insignia of rank; each wreck of manhood a martyr in a noble cause, sharing greatness with the great heroes of the world. Local fame, in this

instance, was the brightest jewel in their crowns.

What thrilling stories they would tell, sitting out the long days in the low-ceiled room of Buck's Tavern! How vivid the descriptions were! The little group of eager listeners bent forward breathlessly. Hark! the shrill note of the bugle fills the air, the steady beat of the drums, the angry roar of the cannon. The gray walls fade away into the dim smoke of the battlefield with its thronging, zealous men, strong and stern in their determination, gallant on both sides with the firmness of their convictions, heroes — heroes — every one, whether in a winning or a lost cause. The last shot trails slowly into silence, and the piteous desolation of the field deserted by all save the dead and dying and the few tender ministrants stretches before the hearer's misty eyes.

No more old "fishing yarns" were spun in that room which had so often echoed with the blood-curdling encounters with sea monsters, no more reminiscences of terrible storms, weathered, thank God!—All that was changed. The heroes who had served their country on land or sea had their turn now. It was "the war" everywhere.

Gardner used to listen to the narratives in silence. He had no word to add to the mass of testimony, no scars to speak "trumpet-tongued" of his valor. He might just as well have stayed at home. In going he had not been missed, his staying behind would not have been heeded. He was of such little importance that his experiences were not worth the telling. Not even the children were curious about them; they treated him with contemptuous indifference, jeering at his sad face and white

hair. There was no sport, however, that could keep them faithful to its rules when there was a prospect of listening to a real hero's story. They would crowd about Browne, who had gone through the entire war and had left his right arm at Gettysburg, and listen to him for hours, their young blood thrilled by his graphic words, their eyes luminous with excitement. And Hammatt, who had been in Libby three months and had come home as gaunt as a spectre, was no less a favorite, but they were unanimous in declaring that "ol' Ezry Gardner hed nothin' to say for hisself."

His humility did not serve to advance him far in the opinion of his fellows. The estimate we take of ourselves is too often the value our acquaintances afford us. A man's belief in his own powers comprises the belief of those around him, and self-

depreciation is not often gainsaid. If a man has a tendency to efface himself, it is not long before the world willingly assists him in his efforts.

Gardner, with his sad, silent demeanor, was disregarded, save on infrequent occasions when some comrade, pausing for breath in his recital, would sweep past him with the query, "Wa'n't thet so, mate?" barely leaving him time to ejaculate an unheeded assent. When he slipped away altogether, no one noticed his going. He felt that instinctively.

V.

"I wandered where a curious crowd
Thronged in an open square,
To see an auction held."

In the autumn of that year, long before interest had flagged in the oft-repeated reminiscences, public attention was for a time diverted from the soldiers by the re-assertion of the Town-crier's importance. With the cessation of the war he had known a sad falling-off in his reputation, which had been, in his thought at least, unquestionably that of the best-informed man on the Island. But in a time when there is nothing happening, one who makes his livelihood

by purveying news, must necessarily feel his occupation gone.

The jingle of the Crier's bell at the approach of the steamer from the Mainland and his eager shouts heralding her coming were not heeded by the lazy loiterers who knew full well when the boat was expected; nor did his voice, crying the night hours, carry much meaning to ears so accustomed to its shrillness that it failed to penetrate their hearing. His other duties consisted in notifying the public whenever any of the less circumspect lost their personal property, on which occasions he called upon the inhabitants to assist in the search and restitution. Articles, in that primitive spot, were lost, or mislaid, but never "appropriated," and they always had a happy faculty of turning up, to the delight of the whole community. With the excep-

tion, however, of the habitual misplacing of Mrs. Clisby's spectacles, in which even her most tolerant neighbors were beginning to feel their interest wane, the Crier had not served in this branch of his official capacity for months.

He forgot his dignity and sank to the level of a mere listener, but his pride in the heroes drowned any regret he might have felt for his deposed state. He was fast becoming used to a life of idleness when that dream was dispelled and he was restored to his former consequence. Suddenly, without any warning, there sounded the clanging of his bell. The group of men and boys in Buck's Tavern hardly noticed the noisy summons at first; they were deeply absorbed in the details of a story which had thrilled them for the hundredth time it may be.

"It wuz this way," Hammatt was saying, "me an'— Ain't thet the Crier?" he interrupted his recital to ask. No answer was necessary, for the insistent, clamorous voice filled the street without.

"Like ez not Comfort Clisby's lost her specs ag'in," drawled a man from the remote corner, "she 's so old she ca-ant keep a tormented thing. Go 'long, mate, let the wimmen folks take keer o' theirselves."

His counsel fell upon empty air, for the little audience melted away like snow before an April sun, the orator himself pressing out with the rest. The man who had spoken last, sat irresolute for a moment, then he got up sheepishly and hastened after his friends.

Outside, the Crier reigned supreme; age elbowed youth, and men and women alike stood eager to do him homage by their

undisguised interest. They repeated his sentences to one another as if they were words of wisdom, and greeted, with unmistakable signs of enthusiasm, the information that an auction of superior horses would be held on the morrow in Barnet's field. It was an event which promised much enjoyment to the Islanders, whose amusements were remarkable chiefly for their rarity. The small boys tossed their caps in mid-air and gave vent to shrieks of delight, while their elders expressed their feelings in the sedater syllables of age.

The weather the next day was ideal; Nature seemed to realize the importance of the occasion, and, in obedience to her command, the September sky put on the blue and gold of June. At an early hour the inhabitants of the town and the little ham-

lets scattered about the Island repaired to the scene of action; to their minds the commonplace, sordid auction assumed the proportions of some grand festival which demanded not only punctuality but unflagging zeal as well. The women, to do it further honor, had arrayed themselves in their "meetin' gowns;" what flowers were denied them at their feet nodded in profusion from their bonnets amid multi-colored bows and feathers. The small girls, too, were awkwardly conscious in their best attire and tightly braided locks. But the boys revelled in the untrammelled bliss of every-day clothes and bare feet, and most of the men slouched about in their old garments, unashamed of the contrast they offered to the few who had been induced by their wives into wearing their Sunday splendor, and whose looks of complacency

but ill-disguised their envy of their less hampered brothers.

The people wandered slowly up and down the field, their roving glances noting everything. Scraps of conversation floated upon the air; accounts of family matters, the last morsel of town gossip, and remarks about the coming sale were inextricably mingled. A number of the horses had been in the late war, and that fact surrounded them on the instant with a halo of glory. The auctioneer was not slow to press this advantage home, and before the day's work began, extolled their merits with an eloquence that held his audience spellbound.

Gardner paused for a moment on the outskirts of the crowd, then he turned half-sadly and made his way past the staked horses. As he walked along with his

hands in his pockets his steps were arrested, without any volition on his part, in front of a small white pony at the farther end of the line. He looked up carelessly and encountered the glance of a pair of trusting eyes. A delicious tremor of astonishment ran through him. In all his life he never had met just such a glance; it was so full of affection and confidence.

It might have been his fancy, and perhaps his sensitive soul seeking sympathy, would have read the same meaning in the notice of the other horses, but he had not felt called upon to pause by any of them. He looked around stealthily at the gay, little groups of people dotted about the field, then he gazed deep into the beautiful eyes and put his hand shyly on the arched neck. The pony gave a low whinny of content — she was an amiable beast — and rubbed

her head against his arm, as though petitioning for further petting.

"Ef I could on'y buy ye," the man whispered, "we 'd be friends, sure, but I can't, an' thet 's all there is to say."

The next moment his solitude was invaded by the approach of five or six women, and at the sound of their voices he fled precipitately, hardly heeding the greeting which, in their holiday humor, they vouchsafed him. Several times during the morning he returned to the spot, drawn by some irresistible magic, and it seemed to his quick-beating heart that the brown eyes always greeted him affectionately. He felt sure that the horse recognized him.

At last he retreated to the end of the field and seated himself on the fence, pulling his soft hat down about his eyes and ears to shut out the sights and sounds of his little

world. Though he thus cut himself off from his surroundings his mind was haunted by that trusting glance, and in his hearing there still lingered that cry of delight.

"Ef it wuz on'y mine," he said half-aloud, rocking backwards and forwards in the warm September sunshine, — "ef it wuz on'y mine, but it ain't, an' it can't be, an' thet 's all there is to say."

He tried to view the matter philosophically, and then on a sudden a question presented itself to his mind:

"Why should n't the horse be yours?"

The audacity of the suggestion startled him; he pushed his hat back and looked around. It almost seemed as if the words had come from without, but his companions were as usual oblivious of his presence. Then the voice within him went on:

"Why should n't the horse be yours?

Why don't you buy it? You 've more than enough money stowed away. What are you saving it for? You 'll never be 'on the town'" —

"Jehosaphat!" Gardner interrupted his counsellor. "I'll do it, I swon I will."

He struck the rail at his side with a force that sent the splinters flying; the next moment he sprang to the ground and walked hastily towards the dealer. Halfway across the field he paused, a shrewd precaution sharpening his thoughts — his neighbors must not suspect his intentions. He stood still, uncertain how to act. He could not return to his home for the little hoard put by for the rainy day, and he had no money with him. The auction was down for twelve sharp. He threw back his head and gazed unflinchingly up into the blue — the true countryman's unfailing dial.

It was near mid-day. He looked down distractedly. What should he do? — to whom should he turn?

"Hello, Ezry!"

He started at the sound of a familiar voice and found himself confronted by a fellow-villager.

"How d'y, Starr?" he returned, with an unusual show of cordiality.

"Fine lot o' hosses there," Starr went on with a backward sweep of his thumb. "Thet bay beats 'em all; he 's got *the* p'ints! Guess I know 'thout any dealer to tell 'em to me. Now, I would n't look twicet at thet roan, though he 's be'n praisin' her sky-high. She 's got four w'ite feet! I drawed his attention to thet, but he sez nobody goes by thet po'try nowadays; 't ain't true. I tol' him 't wuz gospil true, an' I hain't never knowed it to fail."

"But ef the hoss is all w'ite, wut then?" Gardner interposed faintly.

"H-m! I hain't never thought o' thet, though in my 'pinion a w'ite hoss is no good. He hain't got the stayin' powers of a bay, or a black."

"Is thet so? I never made a pertickler study o' hosses."

Gardner's voice was full of wavering, but he could not help feeling a trifle elated at the idea that Starr was not in competition for the mild-eyed pony.

"Be ye goin' to buy?" he asked quickly, to cover his delight.

"Wal, I hed some thoughts o' it. Ef my figger 'll fetch the bay I won't hol' back."

"Hev ye brung your money 'long?"

Starr glanced disapprovingly at the lowered face at his side.

"Wal, no! I cal'late I ain't sech a precious fool ez to be kerryin' money 'bout. I might lose it. I'll fetch it to-morrer fast enough ef I get the hoss, my word 's good fer suthin', I guess."

The sound of the bell rung by the Crier's energetic hand drowned Gardner's low reply. Both men started apart and ran with the rest of the crowd to the rough wooden seats that had been erected temporarily in front of a rude platform. The auctioneer took his place with much dignity. The fact that his rostrum was a barrel, the approach to which was reached by a box set up on end, did not disturb his equanimity in the least; his comprehensive glance was full of tranquil enjoyment. The impatience written upon the faces before him was a tribute to his personality and the impor-

tance of the undertaking in hand. He cleared his throat mightily.

"They say it's late enough to begin," he said, "and I reckon they're about right. Bring up Bay 'Charley,' boys."

As he finished speaking the pride of the collection was brought on the platform before him.

"Looks ez ef he'd taken to eatin' barr'l hoops an' his skin could n't holt 'em," some detractor suggested from the benches.

"He *is* thin, Major, but he'll flesh up mighty quick. He's the hero I was telling you about—went all through the war, was in thirty battles. What's that, Tom?—Thirty-five? Oh! in thirty-five battles. Gover'ment ought to plaster him thick with medals, but they're a little slow at Washington, so I'm givin' him honorable

mention, as the least I can do. Now then, who 'll bid first? He 's puffickly sound. The man who gets him 'll get a good servant. Did you say anything, sir?"

A sudden timidity seemed to have settled upon the people — a bashfulness which the cheery, insinuating voice of the auctioneer could not make responsive. Some of the women giggled nervously, a few boys laughed aloud, but the men sat dumbly gazing at the horse, which was restlessly pawing the platform.

"Walk him about, Tom," the auctioneer went on good-naturedly, "let the ladies and gentlemen see his paces. Now then, won't some one start the ball rollin' ? There 's a round dozen to come on after him. If it was n't for that I 'd wait a hundred years to oblige you. What did you say, sir? Fifteen dollars? Oh ! come now, you 're

jokin'. Why, his blinders are worth that. Twenty-five? H-m! now you 're talkin'! "

"Thirty."

"Forty."

The words snapped out like the preliminary shots in a skirmish; the men threw off their indifference and entered the contest with evident relish. They glowered at one another angrily as the bidding went on.

"Fifty."

Starr leaned forward and looked at his opponent. It was Coleman, who was reputed to know a good thing when he saw it. The merits of Bay Charley were considerably augmented by this monetary appreciation. Starr drew in his under lip nervously.

"Fifty dollars!" ejaculated the auctioneer in the pause. "I 'd drown that horse off the South shore first. No, sir-ee, I won't let him go at that price."

"Sixty."

"Sixty-five."

"Seventy," Starr gasped out the word with difficulty.

"Seventy-five," Coleman was perfectly unmoved. He returned the vindictive glance which Starr flashed at him with one of complacency, and then looked at Bay Charley with proprietary interest. The horse was standing quite still, his thin nostrils dilated, his proud neck arched. He was a beautiful creature; his dark coat gleamed like satin in the sun. Starr followed the glance and then his eyes went back to his adversary's face; its air of prospective ownership irritated him beyond expression. He noted again the beauty of the horse, the one slender leg bearing the white stocking which, to his mind, had said conclusively, "Buy him!" He

squared his shoulders as he rose to his feet.

"Eighty dollars!" He fairly hurled the words at his antagonist.

"Eighty-five."

Starr almost foamed at the mouth. A restraining hand was placed upon his coat and, in the breathless silence that followed, a woman's anxious voice was heard:

"Set down, David, do set down. 'T would be a sin to go more 'n thet."

Starr twitched his coat away from his wife's grasp.

"Ninety," he said firmly.

A murmur of voices, some approving, some dissenting, filled in the little pause. The auctioneer raised his hammer.

"Ninety-five," called Coleman calmly.

Starr shook his fist in anger. He struggled with some words, but his wife's distressed voice drowned their utterance.

"Going," cried the auctioneer, "going at ninety-five dollars. Did you say anything, sir? Did you raise it? Going at ninety-five dollars. Gone! Bay Charley 's yours, sir, at a dirt cheap figger."

Coleman turned to receive the congratulations of his friends, and Starr resumed his place, venting his wrath upon the woman at his side, whose plump face was trembling with excitement. The sale held no interest after that for him, though it proceeded briskly enough. It was as if the sun had been blotted out of the firmament.

From time to time his wife ventured some gentle suggestion, its meaning emphasized by a reassuring dig of her elbow; but her overtures of peace were of no avail. She relapsed finally into silence, and sat watching the horses as they were brought forward and disposed of to her more fortu-

nate neighbors, with envy swelling in her breast.

Her face lost its good-humored expression and grew despondent. It brightened visibly, however, as the white pony stepped on the platform. Mrs. Starr gave a low ejaculation of delight.

"There, David, there!" she cried excitedly, "now 's your chanst. Thet 's jes' wut I want."

Starr shook himself away from the importunate elbow.

"Ye don' know nothin' 'bout hosses, Hester," he growled, "thet 's on'y a plaything. Guess I ain't a chil' to bid fer a thing like thet."

His companions seemed to share the same opinion, for the little animal stood some minutes gazing about beseechingly, while the auctioneer waited patiently for the silence to be broken.

Gardner sat at the end of the last row of seats watching the proceedings in trembling dismay. The whole sale had been full of absorbing interest to him, though he had witnessed the purchase of the other horses with no envious feelings on his part. He had been terrified at the eager bandying of words; the display of recklessness reached in the bidding for Bay Charley had seemed the climax of extravagance. That a horse should bring ninety-five dollars was an unheard-of and a terrible thing to his frugal mind. He felt his own poverty keenly, and sat quite still, his mouth growing dry and his whole being filled with apprehension. To complete his discomfiture the pony, whose approach he had alternately dreaded and longed for, suddenly became the centre of attraction. His heart beat tumultuously. It seemed to

him that her glance singled him out from all the crowd; her eyes read his very soul. Would she understand the real reason if he failed to buy her, and not set it down to avarice? He put his hand through his suspender and twitched it convulsively — it lay so tight over his heart.

"Well," the auctioneer drawled, "the sun 'll be goin' down soon and you can't jedge much of horse-flesh by starlight."

His attempt at playfulness tickled the rustic sense of humor and several of his hearers laughed outright. One of the men started the bidding good-naturedly.

"Five," he shouted.

"Dollars or cents?" some one called from the rear.

"Oh! come now," interposed the auctioneer; "dollars, of course."

"Ten dollars!"

Every one's attention was diverted by the new voice. Some of the women craned their necks around to see the speaker.

"I declar' to goodness ef 't aint Ezry Gardner!" Mrs. Starr exclaimed. "Wut ever doos he want of a hoss? I wish ye 'd raise the figger fer me, David."

Starr followed his wife's glance and saw his old neighbor leaning forward excitedly, his burning gaze fixed on the auctioneer's face; his whole fate seemed to be trembling in the balance. Starr brought his great fist down on his knee with a powerful thump, as the determination to punish Gardner for his secretiveness struck his fancy. He was angry with everybody; his feelings were still smarting from his disappointment of the earlier morning, and he meant that some one should suffer for it. He raised the price and chuckled grimly at

the little man's visible dismay, as he met his opponent's glance.

Gardner caught his suspender again in his nervous fingers and held it away from his brown flannel shirt. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, but he managed to articulate, "Twenty."

The pony looked toward him — oh, yes, he was certain of that; but there was much that he did not understand. The jeering laughter from his mates and the cries of "Thet 's right!" "Go it, Ezry!" stunned him; nor could he comprehend why Starr, who had spoken so contemptuously of white horses, should now be his only adversary. He threw back the challenge, and his tormentor increased his perplexity by bidding higher.

He paused irresolute. He was not conscious how long his indecision lasted.

Everything was in a mist about him. The little horse with her trusting glance faded from his sight, and the man who held the disposition of her fate in his hands seemed to have disappeared altogether. Gardner made an effort to regain his composure and looked around piteously. Something dark flashed before him in the sunlight. It flashed once, and, as it fell, the word "going" reached his ears. It flashed a second time, and again there came that ominous sound. It hovered a third time in mid-air — paused — trembled —

"Forty — forty," he cried, leaning forward breathlessly.

The auctioneer turned in his direction.

"Forty," he repeated, and then with much urbanity, "has the other gentleman anything to say?"

"Not this mornin'," Starr answered with

exaggerated politeness, while his wife tried to shake his resolution, — "not this mornin', thank ye. Forty dollars is a good deal to pay fer "four white feet an' a w'ite nose," but ye can't say I did n't warn ye, Ezry Gardner."

Gardner fell back on the seat in a helpless heap, hardly realizing his good fortune. He felt suddenly very weak, but after a few moments the earth grew steadier and he climbed down and walked away to enjoy his triumph alone. He could not even trust himself in the pony's presence.

When the auction was over and the people were again thronging the field, he went back to where *his* horse was waiting for him. He put his hand on her neck and met her tranquil gaze.

"My beauty — my beauty!" he cried ecstatically, "ye 're my very own now."

He could hardly tear himself away. The long walk across the moors had never seemed so interminable, and the hours of the night spent in his home were almost endless. With the first stirrings of day he was up, and, with the largest portion of the little hoard in the old caddy transferred to his pocket, he traversed the moors again. He stumbled many times in his excitement, fearful that some hindrance might cause a delay which would imperil his possession of the horse. He did not know any approach to peace until the sum was safely placed in the dealer's hands and the receipt duly acknowledged, then he stumbled out of the man's presence with all the signs of drunken joy and hurried to claim his property.

Seen through the glasses of ownership the pony was doubly valuable, and her master felt no regret for what he secretly termed

"a vast amount o' money," which his natural parsimoniousness at other times would have treasured. He was quite willing to part with more in exchange for some bits of old harness, and he loitered about discussing the proper care of horses with whomsoever he could get to talk with him.

It was late in the day when he started for home, leading the animal by an old halter, a bag of feed and a bundle of straw slung across her back and his own arms filled with parcels. They moved slowly, sedately along, man and beast, full of pride. Once out of the town, with the sweet expanse of the moors about them, Gardner, walking by his horse's head, grew suddenly talkative and poured out his fancies in ecstatic whispers. He pointed out different spots across the level land, he called her attention to the changing glory of the bushes,

the bright golden-rod, and the nodding asters. He paused delightedly while she slaked her thirst at the little pond no larger than a village door-yard, and through everything he was conscious of her sympathy. His simple, child-like heart was aglow with love. All the feelings that had lain dormant within him from his birth surged up and found an outlet at last.

The after-glow was flooding the sky with a wonderful radiance when they entered the village by the old main road. As they passed the first house that stood like a sentinel facing the moors, a tiny child toddled gleefully through the open door out into the little strip of garden in front. Gardner paused and glanced in at the simple interior, and as he lingered the young mother ran out and caught the small runaway in her arms.

"Baby, oh, baby!" she cried.

Gardner passed on. His heart was unspeakably touched. His life had known no such experience; no woman's love, no child's love, had ever cheered his lonely lot. He had been denied the little priceless demonstrations which glorify so many lives. But the word uttered in the tender mother-voice was surcharged with an affection that thrilled some responsive chord in his being. He straightened his bent shoulders proudly, grateful for the new companionship that had been given to him. He was no longer alone. He turned to his horse.

"I didn't ax 'em ef ye hed a name," he said simply. "I did n't think o' thet. But o' course ye must hev suthin' to go by, an' so I'll call ye 'Baby.' It doos sound well."

VI.

. . . Love greatens and glorifies
Till God 's aglow to the loving eyes
In what was mere earth before.
ROBERT BROWNING.

As the years passed Starr was forced to modify his opinion of the "stayin' powers" of white horses in general and of Baby in particular. His pet theories crumbled to the earth. Bay Charley, despite the alluring promise of his "one white foot," had only lived a matter of six weeks or so. Starr would have been more than human if he had not felt some thrill of rejoicing at Coleman's ill-luck. The truth voiced by the

clever Frenchman, that there is always something in the misfortunes of our friends not entirely displeasing to us, is one which, try as we will, we cannot wholly deny. It was especially true in Starr's case. The envy with which he had regarded Bay Charley's owner ended in a chuckle at his expense. He could even afford to be generous after a fashion, though Coleman, smarting with the idea of having been tricked, resented all amicable overtures. He was ready to vent his spleen on Starr now that the dealer was out of the way, and blamed his former friend for the untimely decease of the horse.

Whatever elation Starr might have felt at his own lucky escape was considerably lessened by his wife's conduct. She perceived with praiseworthy feminine astuteness that it was her mission to point a

moral, and she was not a woman to neglect her opportunities. She never tired of telling her husband that she had saved him more than ninety-five dollars, and when, in heated moments he reproached her with any extravagance on her part, she generally turned the tables in the domestic discussion. Nor was she slow to press home the clearness of her views where Baby was concerned. She felt it a subject of regret, as did many of the neighbors, that the little pony should develop attributes with which no one had credited her.

Horses came and horses went the way of all flesh, but Baby still bore an undaunted front. The most familiar actors on the whole Island were Gardner and his horse. They were always together. Was Baby to be seen plodding across the moors, or waiting in the town streets, or standing fetlock-

deep in the sand while the rough cart of domestic make was being filled with drift-wood, then her master was never very far away, his face, in its frame of white beard and hair, beaming with shy friendliness. By that strange power of association which shapes our features into some likeness of what is uppermost in our thoughts, master and horse had grown to look singularly alike. The soft mildness in Baby's glance found its reflection in Gardner's too. The hard lines of his face seemed to relax into unwonted gentleness as old age settled down upon him.

His neighbors noted this new phase in his character half-grudgingly; they regarded his timid offers of help with suspicion, seeking amongst themselves for some base motive on his part to account for his actions. Here and there some of the

women, mindful of certain little kindnesses received at his hands, spoke loudly in his praise. Phœbe Macy was one of these, though it was long before she knew what friendly hand had kept her wood-pile stacked all through the hard winters. She had surprised Gardner one night at his self-appointed task, and the little man had cowered under her thanks as a school-boy trembles under a deserved punishment. He had fled at the first opportunity. "'T wa'n't nothin' to make sech a fuss 'bout," he muttered in response to her volubility.

With the passing of the years the Island, which may have been the abiding-place at one time of the old Vikings, — if the Norse legend be true, — gained something in celebrity as a summer resort. Fashion never really invaded the wind-

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swept stretch of land; it was too primitive and remote to be a potent magnet to many merry-makers, but for those longing for the charm of a simple life it was full of irresistible attractions. The long, golden days, sweet with the manifold perfumes of the moors and the invigorating breath of the sea, brought health and strength in their train to jaded nerves and tired bodies.

The town heartily welcomed the influx of strangers, and, as evidence of good-will, produced a number of hotels of unpicturesque proportions, while the natives developed a shrewd eye for business by taking boarders. Nor was the little fishing-village on the opposite side of the Island unmindful of this commendable example. In its turn it opened its doors wide to the alien with a show of hospitable intent.

Gardner had his share in the windfall of good fortune, though his narrow home did not afford shelter to any transient guest. A larger sphere of usefulness was disclosed to him and his horse. With numerous errands to do for the summer visitors, it was almost a daily occurrence for the two to plod townwards in the early morning, returning by nightfall. It never ruffled the old man's peace of mind to hear his primitive, little cart and aging pony designated as the "Lightning Express." That witticism had originated with some college boy, but it was immediately snapped up by the natives, whose newborn derision did not wholly veil their envy of former times. Gardner took what business came his way thankfully enough, not competing with his neighbors

who rattled contemptuously past him. He would not have exchanged Baby for any of their fleeter horses, whose merits did not appeal to him. To his mind Baby possessed all the virtues. Could he not say that from a deep knowledge after those long years of service? And were there not many who could attest to her faithfulness and worth during that time?

Ask them all — those men and women with whitening hair and slower step, and the young married people who had been the jeering children back in the days when Baby first came to the Island. Had they no testimony to give? And if words in praise of her gentleness were wanting, ask the little ones — ask the little ones. How odd it seemed that the old man should turn to the children now! There was a time

when he fled from them as from a pestilence, pursued by their mocking cries. And then, suddenly, as he grew to love his horse, his warmer nature unfolded by degrees. It almost seemed as if some unseen hand had set the door of his heart ajar.

"It 's all 'count o' Baby," he would say to himself, as the little ones ran to meet him — the poor folk's children and the small summer visitors. They would crowd around the old pony and offer her grass, or a bit of an apple, or a lump of sugar — not one too timid to proffer some gift. And they would linger by the man's side and talk to him about his horse, about the sea, about the moors, about anything that came into their tiny minds. His halting tongue and slow fancy made simple stories for them.

Baby was his constant theme. Never a touch of that far-away time full of the

sounds of war. None of the children knew of that experience, they only knew about the artless Island life, the recurring seasons of the year and the gifts in their bestowal. They appreciated with delight that Baby liked the gentle summer shower and the soft, damp mist that felt so good on their faces too. Did Baby tremble at the lightning? Why, so did they; and the thunder always made them crowd their fingers into their ears — how did she shut out the dreadful sound? It did not surprise them to hear that Baby sniffed the keen, salt air with eager nostrils, nor that she loved to stand on the shore watching the waves trying to catch one another as they rolled in on the beach in their never-ending game. It all seemed true to them, because it was true to the old man who told his stories so lovingly.

While he left those darker times unmentioned, he had not forgotten them. He knew full well that children listen with bated breath to tales of bravery, that their tiny pulses beat faster at the recital of deeds of courage. He could have told of the valor of others, though he could boast of none of his own. But that past was a sealed book to him. He never spoke of it save to his one confidante, Baby, and seldom to her; he felt she understood so well.

It had been long before he had taken her fully into his confidence and had disclosed the haunting secret of his life. She had been in his possession for years, and had been his dearest care always; he had won her trust and love, and had given in return an unstinted affection; but he still hid what he felt might shake her faith in him, — the secret of his own pitiful cowardice. He

talked to her frankly on every subject, except the one which thrilled him with shame. He used to tell himself that some day he would make a clean breast of it all, and if she turned from him, if she shivered at his approach, it would be only what he deserved. But he would wait until she loved him better before he told. Love is so willing to forgive — he would wait.

To us, with our wider knowledge and companionship, there is something half-pathetic, half-ludicrous, in the idea the old man had of his horse, but to him she was the one friend of his life—the only creature that had ever cared for him. His mother had been a stern, taciturn woman who had won no love from him because she bestowed no affection, nor had ever felt its need. But his horse seemed human — was human! She required no speech such as

ours to tell him of her confidence, and he could not afford to lose it; he was not brave enough to show himself in his true colors.

"Some day, some day, on'y not now," he would say to his conscience, "I 'll tell some day."

And, as in those other years, he silenced the voice within his breast.

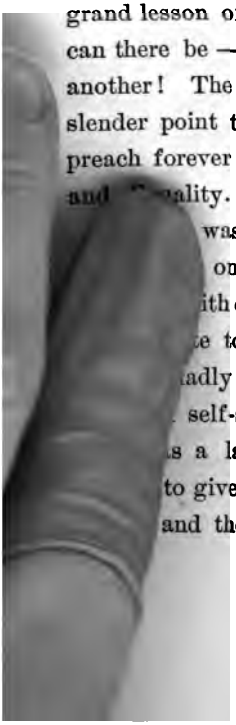
VII.

Their names
Graven on memorial columns, are a song
Heard in the future . . .
. . . their examples reach a hand
Far thro' all years, and everywhere they meet
And kindle generous purpose, and the strength
To mould it into action pure as theirs.

TENNYSON.

ABOUT this time the old town, proud of her heroes, sought to honor those sons of hers who had fallen in the war. It was her wish to raise a monument to their memory in the street they had loved so dearly — a monument inscribed with their names, which should stand through the

years bearing the noble record and testifying of their valor when those who had known them best were dust. It should tell unborn generations of the courage that had sprung forth at their country's need, and teach the grand lesson of the love — no greater love can there be — that lays down its life for another! The granite shaft, lifting its slender point towards the heavens, should preach forever the joint truth of Freedom and [illegible]ality.



was one which found a home in on the Island, and the inhabi- ith each other in their eagerness e to the fund. Gardner came adly with his offering, but he felt self-satisfaction at the amount, s a large one for a man in his to give. It was made in a modest and though it was speedily noised

about, as everything is in a small place, he took no pleasure in the thought that his neighbors were commenting upon his unexpected generosity. He guessed, rather than heard, the general interpretation that he had given so lavishly, because he had come out of the struggle with a whole skin. It was looked upon as a species of thank-offering. He alone knew that he willingly deprived himself as a compensation for the cowardice which had kept him unresponsive for so long, and, in the end, had made such a half-hearted soldier of him.

The day of the unveiling was the proudest one in the annals of the Island. Illustrious strangers from the "Continent" honored it with their presence, and the inhabitants of the town and the fishing-villages assembled in a spirit of sober rejoicing to assist at the ceremonies. They

thronged the quaint street, elbowing one another with good-humored force for the best places, their weather-beaten faces glowing with pride and enthusiasm. The solemnity of the occasion was swallowed up by a great wave of excitement which threatened to submerge them all.

Gardner was not with the crowd in the square; he was in an important place, though it was not one of his own seeking. The few men who had returned from the war were seated on the platform, their faded uniforms, which they wore at the committee's suggestion, forming a pathetic bit of color which stirred all hearts strangely. They looked sheepish and awkward, despite the pride that gleamed every now and then from their lowered eyes; still their exaltation was not wholly displeasing to them. On the morrow they

would think it the greatest moment of their lives. Gardner was the only one to be thoroughly uncomfortable in his surroundings. He had never felt so aware of the little claim he had on the tolerance of those about him. He had no right to the high place of honor. He longed to creep away and hide himself. What would they all say if he were to interrupt the Judge in his lengthy oration, and tell them the truth? Would they understand his waverings? Would they be merciful? If they knew, would they not tear him from his place and brand him with shame?

Instead of that he sat there in the sunshine, unmindful of the smooth phrases, with his eyes fixed on the flag-draped shaft before him. He did not notice the allusion to "the brave boys who had come back," though he felt Cole-

man's hasty nudge and heard his whispered words:

"Take off yer hat, mate, they 're cheerin' us."

Mechanically he bared his head and lowered it in response to the tremendous applause from the crowd, but his heart was sick within his breast and he kept repeating to himself:

"Ef they on'y knowed — ef they on'y knowed."

He shrank back on the bench in his efforts to efface himself from the scene, while no conscious triumph of accomplished duty smoothed out the tense lines of suffering on his face. He did not heed the Judge droning on; he was oblivious to everything until a mighty shout rose as from one throat. He raised his eyes as the flag fell and disclosed the granite shaft that

was to stand for all time in memory of those other "brave boys" who had laid down their lives in the service of their country.

Gardner waved his cap about his head with a shrill cheer. He could appreciate valor and patriotism, though he had been a coward. Ah! who better? Our inefficiency does not blind us to the efficient work of others. He added his voice to the enthusiasm around him, glad to evince his pride in those deserving ones whose names they had met to commemorate. When the crowd dispersed he climbed down from the platform and walked about the monument, scrutinizing it from every point of view. He spelled the simple Latin inscription wonderingly.

"I did n't know there wuz sech a person here," he murmured, "an' I can't seem to

make out who 't is. I thought I knowed all the boys that fit."

A shadow fell athwart the stone, it was caused by the approach of a stranger, a kindly-faced man, who, for the moment, was unconscious of Gardner's proximity. He read the little sentence half aloud as if trying to fix its meaning deep in his memory, then he turned to go.

"Axin' yer pard'n, sir," Gardner said in a voice made husky by timidity, "but would ye be so perlite ez to read thet ag'in? I can't seem to make it clear. 'Pears to me it ain't the name, Christian or surname, of anybody hereabouts."

The stranger paused and complied with the request.

"It 's Latin," he explained, with a smile that warmed the old heart near him, "and it means 'for the love and honor of their

country.'" He raised his eyes and his keen glance took in every detail of the bent figure in the faded blue uniform.

"You know the meaning of those words, surely?" he went on. "You brave fellows proved that to us back there. Won't you give me your hand, friend?"

Gardner put his hand shyly into the extended palm. He could say nothing, he was quivering with emotion.

"Were you wounded?"

Gardner shook his head.

"Were you in many battles?"

"Four."

The old man's voice trembled with suppressed excitement, his secret was so near disclosure. In another minute it would be laid bare, he thought, and then those kindly eyes would be averted in contempt. But he was spared that. The Judge called to

the stranger to join him on the platform, and, with a parting smile, he hastened away, carrying with him the consciousness that he had almost seen into a fellow-creature's soul.

Gardner stood irresolute, studying the Latin words and repeating them, as he spelled them out laboriously, with a pronunciation which it is safe to say will never be adopted by any university; then he walked about the monument and looked at the other inscriptions. He had no difficulty in deciphering them; they were familiar household words everywhere on the Island — the names of the heroes who had given their lives "for the love and honor of their country." A little glow of personal pride flushed his features as he came to Joshua Macy's name.

"Wal! Josh desarves to hev his name

down," the old man muttered. "Josh wuz a true hero; he did n't grudge the goin', the givin' up; he would hev done it ag'in. Doos he know this?"

Gardner broke off in his soliloquy and looked at the letters before him for an answer. Wherever Macy was, was he conscious that, as long as the stone should last, his name would stand there on the honor roll? Where was he? What had become of him? Was there any "afterwards"?

Gardner stirred nervously. There was a time when he had never troubled himself about such thoughts, but of late they had assailed him with a persistency which he could not evade. He had no answer to give. But if there were no "afterwards" the splendor of Macy's deed was still worth the doing a thousand times to win

the same result. Even if a man died, never to rise again, goodness and love and honor would live on through the ages. They were imperishable. Some such thought crept into the slow mind groping towards the light. And if those qualities lived to help men on, who should say that this little span of troubled years was all there was of life? Who should deny that somewhere, somehow, man lived again?

The placid bearing of Phœbe Macy came to Gardner's remembrance on the instant. Forgetfulness had never given that deeper beauty to her face, nor the tenderer tones to her voice. Surely she must believe in an "afterwards" that she could bear her sorrows so nobly. And throughout the land, where so many fields were fields of battle, where the shadow of sadness lay on so many hearths, but where trust in Something

higher was dominant, who could doubt the hope of Immortality?

Gardner lingered by the Monument all through the afternoon, full of vague thoughts, unanswerable questions, and impotent longings. In the stirrings of his heart there was cleansing for his whole moral nature, had he but known it, and relief also for his tortured mind. Some angel's touch had disturbed the waters and a spring of healing had leaped up, but the poor, stunted soul, distorted by ignorance, was powerless to turn the divine opportunity to its best account. He could find no help within himself. He stayed there hoping dumbly for — he knew not what. People passed to and fro, old neighbors who had a word and a nod for him, and strangers who cast curious, amused glances at the unsoldierly proportions of

the small, bowed figure in the dingy uniform.

Down in the lower part of the town, at Buck's Tavern, the other boys in blue were celebrating the day with ginger ale, root-beer, and home-brewed punch in unlimited quantities. They filled the low room with song and story, and, as the hours wore on, they extolled the virtues of the comrades who had not come back with an eloquence more remarkable for its iteration than for its lucidity. There was no place in their remembrance for Gardner. He might have been dead, save, perhaps, had that been the case, they then might have recalled his eccentricities by some passing mention; but living, and a familiar figure in their daily sight, they did not think of him.

He did not care. He was wondering

to himself what it would seem like to be a hero. Suppose they had cut the name of Ezry Gardner in Joshua Macy's stead. He almost wished that it were on the record, not that he was tired of living, but because he would fain be valiant too. He longed to be worthy of the commendation which now he dared not take; he was thirsting for the draught of praise which was near his lips and of which he was unfit to taste.

Ezry Gardner remembered as a hero, one who had died for the honor of his country, who had given his life willingly for the sake of another. The idea was an ecstatic one. But following close upon it there came a bitter thought. If he had fallen down there on some Southern battlefield he never would have known the sweet delights of Baby's com-

panionship. The tears came quickly to his eyes; he put up a hand that trembled nervously and brushed them aside. No, he could not give that up! He was glad to be alive. Not even for the love and honor of his country, not at the demands of pity and brotherhood, would he relinquish his ownership of the little horse.

"I ain't no hero," he murmured as he stumbled away; "I ain't o' the pattern o' heroes."

Something of the ignominy lurking in the avowal still lingered with him, as he unhitched Baby and turned her head homewards. He climbed into the little cart and took the rope reins in his hand.

"G' 'long, Baby!" he said softly.

The pony ambled slowly down the street and out to the open country. Several

times she paused and turned her mild eyes reproachfully on the inert figure on the seat; she could not understand why he should keep his place there so persistently. It was his custom to walk by her side, and as the twilight fell, wrapping them in its soft shadows, his arm would lie across her neck and his voice would pour the account of the day's happenings in her attentive ears. But this night the primitive reins lay idly in his listless grasp, and Baby picked her way on alone.

He could not go to her and tell his secret, and yet he knew that he could no longer accept her trust and withhold it from her keeping. If they were to be true friends, he must make a clean breast and begin afresh. He did not get down until they reached the little home in Cliff street, then he went to the horse's head and led her

gently into the small out-house by its side which served as a stable. He unharnessed her in silence and rubbed her down with loving care. She kept thrusting her face against his, and finally he took it in his hands and kissed it tenderly between the eyes.

"I 've got to tell ye," he said huskily, "an' like ez not ye 'll despise me, but it 's fair ye should know. I ain't no hero — I ain't never be'n no hero — I 'm a coward! I wuz a coward w'en I held off from goin' to the war, an' even w'en I went I never give over bein' one. I wuz olluz afeard — afeard o' the firin', an' the men, an' the fightin'; an' too dog-gone afeard to run away an' be honust. I wuz jes' a shamblin', mean coward through it all. There! thet 's all there is to say — ye kin despise me ef ye wantter."

The gentle, brown eyes did not turn away in the least from the white, anxious face, they looked straight back into the misty blue ones with the old confidence and love.

"Wut, Baby!" Gardner whispered tremulously, "ye don't mind, ye're sartin sure ye don't mind — an' ye understand?"

The horse rubbed her head affectionately against his arm.

"Ye 're sure ye won't mind w'en we drive by the Moniment thet my name never could hev be'n there all along o' my bein' a coward? O' course ye 're glad — ez I be — thet it ain't there, cos ef it wuz I could n't be here a-lovin' ye. But, oh! I can't help wishin' fer a cleaner record to show ye, my pooty one."

VIII.

There needs not a great soul to be a hero, there needs a God-created soul which will be true to its origin.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

CONFESSION may not always be remission, but it is at all times relief. To Gardner, with the weight of his secret shared by his friend, there came a tranquillity of mind that was almost incredible. He was like a man returning from a long imprisonment, free at last from the shackles that had bound him physically and morally. The world seemed a different place, the familiar scenes were more beautiful to his chastened glance, and he longed for strength and

opportunity to redeem the failures of the past.

He was conscious that his companions would not have pardoned him as readily and entirely as Baby had done. They would have taken his confession at its true valuation and would have held it continually against him. Our fellows are apt to judge us by the letter of the law, unwilling to make allowances for the weaker natures which are the heritage of most of us. And yet he felt intuitively that if at the time of Macy's death he had had the courage to tell his story, some sense of relief would have come to him then, even had he read contempt in the glazing eyes. His secret at least would have been shared. But now it was understood. He recognized that with a thrill of joy. He could not have told how, or why, but Love works won-

ders, and Baby, his little horse, his one friend, knew all, and was still stanch in her affections.

He moved with a more alert step, he raised his head with some promptings of self-respect at his restoration to what he had been before the war had searched out the infirmity of his nature. He was infinitely better and braver, however, than in that old time, though he did not suspect it. With the wish to give his new self a more crucial test, on the day after his confession he drove to the Monument and stopped there. His heart beat tumultuously as he left the cart and went to the pony's head. He was silent a minute, then in a husky whisper he read the record of the heroes, lingering tenderly over Joshua Macy's name. He murmured again his admission of the previous night in the attentive ears.

Even if he had died in battle by some stray shot and the home-people had honored his memory, he would not have been a hero, — he was nothing but a coward.

And Baby did not fail him! Was it only dumb instinct, after all, that kept her eyes fastened on his face? If they had turned aside ever so slightly, what would not that have implied to the sensitive, anxious man who had nerved himself to this task as a soldier nerves himself to go into battle? But Baby loved him despite everything — loved him even better, if that could be. His faith in her was supreme. Would a man have felt his affection grow stronger for so weak a brother? Would a woman, or child, have known a deeper, more pitying love? Who shall say? Irresolution and timidity so often inspire nothing more kindly than toleration.

Gardner met the pony's earnest gaze with a feeling of content on his part; he was more than satisfied with the sympathy that had fallen to his share. He climbed back into his cart and drove away. There was a joyful smile on his worn face, and, as he went, he whistled the old Doxology softly.

From that time man and horse were more to each other than heretofore. The rolling years cemented their affections more firmly; they grew old together, slower of step and vision, but they seemed to keep pace. There was no visible indication of breaking-up in either. "The Lightning Express" still plied its way between the fishing-village and the town as regularly as usual; not so fast perhaps as in the earlier time, but "jes' ez sure," Gardner was wont to maintain. He had a few patrons, and there was

always something to do. Only nowadays he never rode across the moors. He would drive through the village, and through the town streets, seated in the old cart, in order that Baby's dignity might not be hurt, but as soon as the open country was reached he took his place by her head and tramped resolutely along in the grassy furrows.

"Wal! fer a good many reasons," he acknowledged; "fust fer comp'ny, an' Baby 's the best I 've ever knowed, an' then, ye see, she ain't so spry ez oncet upon a time. Not failin' — oh, no! bless ye, no! but jes' gittin' on. So I like to ease the weight o' the cart — wut with the passels an' sech, it 's heavy enough fer her to draw 'thout my heft throwed in."

He was never able, however, to refuse a child's request to be allowed to ride. That weight could make no difference. The

noisy companionship was a delight to Baby, too, she used to flap her ears back as though to listen the better to the prattling voice. No, Gardner could never refuse a child's pleading. He would lift the little one tenderly on the seat and give the old, frayed reins into the chubby hand, at the same time cautioning the small driver to let them fall gently on Baby's back "so ez not to hurt her."

During the five and twenty years of Gardner's ownership of the cart, the whip-socket had stood empty of any means of castigation. In the children's reign it was often filled with bunches of gay flowers, and then, one day, a small toy flag graced the yawning aperture. If the village-folk noticed the unusual adornment they concluded that their old comrade had picked it up on the moors where it had been dropped

by some passing child. And Gardner kept his own counsel — he knew, none better, how the pretty silken thing had come into his possession. He would always remember with a grateful heart the little, city-bred boy who had come gravely one autumn morning to bid him and Baby good-by, and had left, as a parting gift, his most precious treasure. It was the first token of love that had ever fallen to the old man's lot, and he prized it more highly than he could ever say. Never a day passed that it did not stand there at the head of his cart where the small hand had placed it. Its crimson bars had faded beneath the influences of sun and rain, and the blue field that held the stars had somehow swallowed them entirely, unless one observed closely — but it was beautiful still in its owner's sight.

On the days when there was no occasion

for the "Lightning Express" to run townwards, Baby stood in her stall in placid enjoyment of the rest she had earned so well, and her master was constantly in the low shed.

He found many excuses to be there — the harness always needed mending, and one could tinker forever on the cart and still find some work to do. It was pleasant, too, as a lounging-place where he could smoke his pipe and dream of the little horse and the beautiful world of which the Island was a part. At other times, when duty called him on some short fishing-excursion, he lamented the hours spent in his dory because they deprived him of her society.

What he liked to do best was to take Baby and the cart (since he must make some pretence of employment, else "the

neighbors an' the summer folks would think him queer"), and go down on the beach, ostensibly to pick up driftwood to be sold later at the cottages along the bluff. How good it was to spend the long hours there with the voice of the sea in his ears and the companionship of his tried friend near by! How grand it was to watch the great waves roll in and comb over, with the sunlight gilding the green concave of their glorious curve, breaking the next moment with a thunderous roar almost at his feet! He was a familiar figure there in those later years, trudging patiently back and forth, his arms laden with the sea's spoils in order to save Baby the hard pull through the sand; or sitting by her side with his eyes fixed on the restless waters.

One day, while he was engaged in the former manner, he came upon a man lying

on the beach gazing seaward with the rapt face of a lover. Gardner understood that look. Did he not love the sea himself, and could he not comprehend the longing that would thrill other men? He stopped silently by the stranger, for the moment unperceived. He, too, looked out upon the lonely expanse of water on which there was no glimmer of sail to be seen. Near at hand the surf came sliding up the shore in a sullen, brooding fashion as if meditating a storm, its sad moan answering dully to the call of the rising wind. The whole sea beyond was white with the tossing manes of the war-horses, and out on "The Rips" the spray leaped up angrily and fell again in a shower of mist which every now and then the sun, gleaming fitfully, touched with prismatic colors. The sky was full of dark, low-hanging clouds.

"There 's goin' to be a storm bimeby."

"Yes." The stranger moved a trifle impatiently at the voicing of such an apparent fact; it required no great penetration to read the signs of Nature aright.

"It 's a gran' thing to watch the sea," Gardner went on dreamily; "wut 's so strong ez its strength?"

The stranger murmured something half to himself; the words just reached his companion:

"'The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.'"

"Do ye b'lieve thet?"

"Yes."

"Hev ye b'lieved it long?"

Something in the anxious voice touched the stranger and roused him from his abstraction. He glanced up at the eager face

above him, reading there the slow torture that was going on within the man. A recollection struck his fancy sharply; the years rolled back, and a little scene, at the unveiling of the Soldiers' Monument in the quaint town on the other side of the moors, came quickly to his mind. He had seen that pathetic face with its mute longings before — he had almost had a glimpse of the man's soul.

"Hev ye b'lieved it olluz?"

The question was the veriest whisper, but it quivered with anxiety, and struck the deepest chord in the listener's breast with a sharpness of insistence not to be put one side.

"No, not always — for a long time; yes."

"But before thet, w'en ye did n't b'lieve — wut then?"

"It was dark, darker than night, and I

struggled as a man would struggle out there in that hell of waters, and then, still struggling, I made the shore. And it has been light since."

"But how?"

"I was full of doubt, I could n't believe anything, I was almost wrecked on the rocks, and then, suddenly, I felt that God is too great to be circumscribed by any forms that man can make. If He were not, He could not be God. He is greater than our deepest imaginings, mightier than the mighty waves out yonder, more tender and loving than any thought of ours can frame. That's what I believe."

Gardner sat down shyly.

"Fer me," he said half-wearily, "I ain't never b'lieved — nor wanted ter — nor thought much 'bout it — but I hain't let on. There 's suthin's I don't understand, an'

they 've worrited me, I 'll allow, an' one of 'em is — is there any arterwards? When Josh Macy died back in war-time — shot, ye know — it seemed to me then thet there must be suthin' more, thet it all could n't be over an' done with. An' sence, w'en I 've watched Phœbe — his wife I mean — so hopeful-like, w'y, it seems ez ef it must be true. But I don't know."

"We have to fight that question out for ourselves, each one of us. No man can say from the certainty of vision, but we cannot help feeling that there must be something else — something beyond. To me, the 'afterwards' is a deep, sure truth, as unfailing as that day will follow night and the spring winter. If we believe in the perpetual going on of Nature, why should we deny the same power to the soul? We must believe that" —

"An' then?"

"Trust in the Love that understands, and helps, and pardons."

"Us all?"

"Every one of us."

The sun, which had been shining faintly, had disappeared behind the angry clouds and the sharp, sea air struck keenly in their faces. Gardner turned and scrutinized his companion intently; he met the man's eyes for a moment, then his own fell as a bitter experience in his past touched his remembrance.

"I 've seed ye afore," he said hesitatingly, "over there w'en they unveiled the Moniment. Do ye rickerlect?"

The stranger nodded.

"Ye shook my hand an' called me a brave fellow, but thet wa'n't true. I 'd oughter hev tol' ye thet then, on'y somehow

I could n't. It wuz like this: W'en they went to the war I stayed hum an' pertended I could n't do no good, an' then I went — suthin' give me strength, I don't know wut — p'r'aps it wuz God, though I hain't never thought o' thet afore. But I went, an' I wuz in four battles, ez I said. Thet sounds brave, I 'll allow, but I did n't do nothin'. I wuz afeard, though I tried hard not to let on. Ye see I hain't be'n strickly honust, cos I 've lived in pertence an' taken credit w'ich wa'n't rightfully my doo. I hain't ever let on to anybody 'ceptin' Baby — thet 's my hoss — an' I held back a long spell 'fore I up an' tol' her. But it made no diffunce. W'y, sir, I even think she loved me the better fer it. It would n't hev be'n easy, though, to tell the folks. I could n't hev stud the daily p'intin' at me, an' knowin' thet w'en I went by they 'd say,

'There goes a coward!' Do ye think I hed oughter told?"

"There was no need for any to know, least of all those who would not understand. But other men, many men, in the thick of battle, have felt at first the same waverings of will with you, the same numbing sense of fear. You were not the coward you think, since you remained true to your duty."

"But I wuz afeard to run — ye don't understand — fear kep' me still."

"And how about the times when you waited for action, could you not have found some release then?"

"I wuz afeard o' desartin', if ye mean thet — afeard o' the penalty, an' even ef I hed n't be'n ketched I was afeard o' the shame an' o' myself."

The stranger looked into the worn face

with a sympathetic glance. "I think you do yourself an injustice," he said after a moment; "but let the past rest; surely your life since then has been the better for your struggles."

"I don't know — I hain't thought — it's be'n jes' the same ev'ry day. I've looked to do the best I knowed how, an' things hev be'n easier sence Baby came, folks kinder, an' the children more soshable. Thet's all there is to say. Be ye a-goin' to stay here long?"

"I go to-morrow."

A little shade of regret crept into Gardner's face.

"H-m!" he murmured; "I'm sorry fer thet. I'd like to know ye better, seein' ez ye don't tu'n from me. It 's strange I should hev met ye ag'in. I 've thought often o' ye."

"I shall be coming back next summer."

"Nex' summer? I 'll look to see ye then, mebbe. Ef ye 're passin' Cliff street anytime ye might ax fer Ezry Gardner — they all know Baby an' me round here."

"Don't go yet; stay a little longer and tell me about Baby."

Gardner paused joyfully; he was scrambling to his feet, but at the stranger's invitation he sank down again. This gleam of sympathy was very welcome.

"W'y, it happened this way," he began. He broke off and looked intently at a figure advancing along the beach. It was a man in his bathing-suit.

"The derned fool!" Gardner exclaimed; "he ain't never goin' in swimmin'!" Then, as the man neared them, he sprang up.

"Say, Perfesser," he called; "hallo

there! Ye 'd better not go in, the sea 's monstrous high."

The man waved his hand in a friendly fashion, he was one of the guests at the little hotel in the village.

"That 's all right," he shouted good-naturedly. "I 'm only going for a dip. I 'll stay close to shore." He advanced nearer the water as he spoke and the surf, climbing up the beach, struck against his bare feet and ran higher along the sand. The force of the wave made him totter for an instant, then he plunged in boldly.

Gardner resumed his place.

"The derned fool!" he repeated contemptuously. "I know the man — he 's a perfesser at some collige, an' I guess he 's edicated all the sense out o' his brains. W'y, sir, ye could n't git a native to go in to-day fer anything short o' life

an' death — an' then they 'd think twicet 'bout it. But he kin swim — look how he rides them waves! Wut wuz ye axin' me? — Oh! 'bout Baby. Wal, ye see it wuz like this" —

The stranger interrupted him with a hasty cry.

"The man out there!" he gasped with quivering lips.

Gardner's eyes followed the shaking index-finger. The swimmer had thrown out his arms convulsively, his white, despairing face set towards the shore; the next moment it had disappeared and a huge wave came roaring in.

"Merciful God! — and I can't swim."

The stranger's admission of incompetency was dragged from him with a moan of anguish. He stood half-paralyzed, gazing helplessly around. He did not

notice that the old man had left his side and was running down the beach, not away from danger this time, but into the very heart of it, — a small, pitiably pathetic figure with thin, white hair that was tossed about his weather-beaten face.

"Git help an' a rope," Gardner shouted over his shoulder as he paused just long enough to kick off his shoes. The next moment he plunged into the sea and fought his way through the angry waters, a mere speck on the mighty, turbulent mass.

The stranger stood still gazing distractedly around. Back of him Baby was waiting patiently for her master, the old cart half full of driftwood; but otherwise the beach was deserted — there was not a sign of life stirring. The tent poles stretched their gaunt arms towards the sky

as if mutely imploring assistance, their bright, striped awnings wrapped tightly about them, and tied fast — their cheeriness clothed in desolation. He dared not leave the spot — dared not lose sight of that little figure going to the rescue of a fellow-being; he felt himself powerless to aid in any way.

He called with all the force of his lungs, he ran backwards and forwards through the heavy sand, he waved his arms frantically to attract attention, and the noisy waters boomed disdainfully at his feet, the wind carried his cries back into the deep. Some passers-by on the cliff above him saw his gestures and shouted in response, running on the instant to give the alarm.

He turned from the land and gazed out on the ocean. It seemed an eternity to him since Gardner had left his side. He could see nothing but the great waves with

their white crests, hear nothing but their dreadful moan as they broke on the shore. He strained his eyes for a glimpse of life on the seething waters. In vain! — In vain!

Suddenly he caught a glimpse of a small dark object — Gardner, his heart told him. As he looked he saw him clutch a shapeless mass — there were two heads where a moment before there had been only one. Rescuer and rescued closed in a quick embrace. Then a mighty wall of water shut out the view from the watcher's eyes, but the next instant as the wave receded he saw that the men were turned shorewards, the smaller battling single-armed with the huge billows. The stranger held his breath in suspense. Would they? — could they? — The question trembled in his heart. He closed his eyes in dread.

And Gardner, as he turned, saw the

beach and the little, white spot that he knew was Baby — the little, white spot, gleaming out from the darkness of the sky, that meant home, and love, and friend. He grasped the drowning man tighter with a strength like iron. Would they? — could they? — The question trembled in his heart. And then, as the water filled his ears and raised a barrier between him and the land, shutting out all that was dearest, a prayer, for the first time in his life, surged through his whole being, sweeping away all past misgivings:

"God, O God! help me save this man!"

IX.

Nor deem the irrevocable Past
As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
If rising on its wrecks, at last,
To something nobler we attain.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

To have done your duty, there is no nobler crown to a life.

DE LA RAMÉE.

THE stranger, bending over Gardner, uttered a sigh of relief as he saw the pale blue eyes open.

"My brave fellow!" he said earnestly.

The old man shook his head feebly, but a smile of satisfaction lighted up his white face.

"Ware 's the perfesser?" he asked. "Is he all right?"

"All right, thank God! They worked over him for a while on the beach, and when life came back they carried him to the hotel. His wife is with him now."

"Wal, I guess this day 's l'arnt him a lesson thet he won't fergit in a hurry. He won't go prodjickin' any more with the sea w'en she 's in a tantrum. Who brung me hum?"

"Some of your old mates and I."

"An' Baby, did ye leave her on the beach? I must go fetch her."

"Baby is in her stall."

"Wal, now, thet wuz oncommon good — in ye, pertickerly; we others often lend a hand; it 's kinder neighborly, ye see. Ware be the rest?"

"They've gone to their homes; they

begged to stay, but I wanted to watch by you for a time. They will come later."

"It 's kind o' ye, a stranger, to take the trouble. I won't never fergit it."

"I am proud to do what I can for so brave a hero."

"Sho-h now! ye 're jokin'. An' yet," the old voice grew very anxious, "do ye reely think I 'm thet? Back in war-time I wuz afeard, ye know, but w'en thet derned — w'en thet perfesser wuz drownin' a v'ice jes' sez to me: 'Ezry Gardner, save thet man.' An' I went. There wa'n't no two ways 'bout it, I could n't argefy with thet v'ice. Ye could n't say thet I wuz afeard o' the sea thet I 'd loved all my life, not in the same way, thet is, ez I wuz afeard in battle. O' course, I seed the danger, an' thet I stud on'y a slim chanst to git back; but I went, an' I 'd do the same ag'in an'

glad to. W'y, thet wuz jes' 'bout wut Josh said, an' here I 'm sayin' the same thing with an out-an'-out hero. Thet 's wut Josh wuz, ye know; his name stands writ on the Moniment. But I ain't no hero. Shell I tell ye suthin', stranger? W'en my arm closed on the perfesser an' I tu'ned to bring him hum, I felt so done fer thet I thought we 'd never reach shore tergether. An' suthin' inside o' me sez: 'Let him go; ye can't make it with him, any one would see thet, an' ye 've tried honust, thet oughter count! Let him go, life is sweet to ye yit; there 's the moors an' the sea to love, an' there 's Baby.' An' then I seed Baby, jes' a w'ite speck on the beach, waitin' fer me, an' — an' I gripped the perfesser harder. I prayed to God to help me save him; I meant to reely save him, to die savin' him ef thet wuz the on'y way.

P'r'aps God knowed wut wuz in my mind — I did n't say much — I jes' thought o' Baby an' the moors an' ev'rythin' all in a flash, an' I meant I 'd be willin' to give 'em all up to save the perfesser. An' then I struck out an' swum with all my might an' main, an' the fust I knowed the beach wuz unner my feet, an' then I did n't know nuthin' cl'ar till jes' now."

"My brave old friend!"

"Wut! ye 're sayin' thet still, arter wut I 've tol' ye? I say, sir, do ye think thet mebbe the water washed out the stain in my soul? Would savin' the perfesser kinder cl'ar up thet ol' score o' bein' a coward?"

"I am sure it would — I am sure it has."

"An' I need n't think o' it no more, nor never let on 'bout it to any o' the folks?"

"Never — never — forget it all."

"Wal, now! I'm oncommon glad, an' it doos seem ez ef a heft hed drapped off o' me. I feel ez spry ez a boy! I must go an' tell Baby — oh! she 'll understand fast enough."

"Wait a little longer first."

"Wal — p'r'aps — I 'm kinder bruised from wrastlin' with them breakers, an' this feelin' will stay by me till Jedgmint Day — I know thet! I say, stranger — friend, I mean — wuz thet wut ye meant 'bout the Lord bein' mightier than many waters? He must be thet — not on 'count o' savin' life, but fer savin' souls an' makin' 'em clean ag'in."

. . . . . .

It was late in the afternoon when Gardner crawled from his house into the little stable at its side. He was aching in every bone of his body, and motion of any kind

gave him pain, but he could remain no longer away from his best friend. At the sound of his footsteps Baby turned her head and greeted him with a low cry of welcome.

"I 'm a-comin' — I 'm a-comin'," the old man grumbled fondly; "don't ye be so impatient. Ye can't expec' a man to fly w'en he 's jes' hed a nip an' tuck fight with breakers mount'in high. Oh! ye seed 'em, did ye? An' ye seed me too? Wuz ye s'prised? Did ye think I 'd let the perfesser die out there an' not try to save him? Ye knowed better 'n thet, did n't ye? Ye knowed better 'n even I did myself. An' well ye might, cos it wuz ye thet l'arnt me to think o' others. Oh, my beauty! — my beauty! — wuz ye fearful I would n't come back?"

He put his arms about the pony's neck

and laid his head against hers, sobbing like a child. He was weak and spent, but through his physical exhaustion he felt the peace that had come at last to crown his many struggles, and the tears that fell from his eyes were tears of gratitude. He stood for some time leaning against the quiet animal. It was lonely in the house, now that the kind-faced stranger had gone away, and the silence there was unbearable; but here where Baby understood it was almost like heaven, he thought. He would stay a little longer and rest; it was good for both of them to be together.

Baby started suddenly as the door was flung open and the keen, damp air filled the low room. Gardner raised his head. At first he could see nothing distinctly, everything was in a blur. It seemed to his dazed fancy as he stared helplessly around

that there was a great crowd of people blocking up the doorway and stretching indefinitely away through the little street. What did it mean? Had anything happened? He took a step forward nervously, but as he half stumbled he threw his arm across Baby's neck again and clung to her for support.

"Wut — wut is it?" he stammered.

"We 've come to tell ye thet we set a heap by ye," Starr said huskily as he advanced with outstretched hands. "Ye done a thing to-day thet there ain't many would do — I 'm a-jedgin' from myself — I would n't do it, an' I 'm twicet ez big ez ye be. See here, Ezry Gardner, I 've led the laugh ag'in ye hunderds o' times, an' like ez not I will ag'in, there 's no tellin' — ye can't l'arn an old dorg noo tricks; but wut I want ye to olluz rickerlect is jes' this: thet

I 'm proud o' ye, thet we 're all proud o' ye, an' we 're downright glad thet ye 're standin' here ware we kin tell ye so. Ain't thet the truth, mates? Ain't I jes' v'icin' the gennle feelin's?"

A little murmur of assent filled in the pause. Gardner looked shyly at the others as he wrung Starr's hand. He felt his cup full to overflowing — they were all so kind, but he had no words with which to thank them. He struggled with his bashfulness.

"Yes, we 're powerful proud o' ye, an' no mistake," another neighbor cried, pressing forward eagerly. "Ye 're wut I call a hero."

Gardner shrank closer against Baby's shoulder, a quick flush crimsoning his face. At last the time had come when he must stand revealed in his true colors to the home-people. His better nature bade him

speak without delay. A choking sensation rose in his throat, his hand trembled in Baby's mane as he tried to articulate some sound. And yet what was it the stranger had said? The words came to his mind in a sudden flash —"There is no need for any to know" — and again — "Forget it all."

Forget it all! How could he? How dared he? Had he any right to forget? It was not true, then, that the victory he had won out there in the waters had washed the stain of former cowardice from his soul. It was still there — so dark and hideous that it would dim forever the bright bit of genuine courage that had carried him to the professor's rescue. That ought to count for something, the old man told himself; the stranger had said it was brave, his neighbors thought it was brave. Ah! it was too cruel, when they had met to honor

him, that he must turn aside their friendly overtures, converting them into scorn. It was so sweet to have them crowding around with words of praise. Surely he deserved them a little — just a little; those dark times were over and gone years and years ago. He raised his head slowly, all the color had faded out of his face, even his lips were ashy.

"Ye 're wrong, mates," he faltered. "I ain't no hero. I wuz a coward in wartime. I wuz afeard o' goin' at fust, an' w'en I went I wuz jes' choked up with fear through ev'rythin'. Thet 's all there is to say. I saved the perfesser's life — willin'ly ye know — willin'ly — but I — ain't — no — hero."

The little room was very still after the tremulous voice ceased speaking — so still that it seemed to Gardner that every one

present must hear his rapid heart-beats and the bounding pulse hammering for egress at his wrists and temples. He kept his eyes fixed on the floor. He could not watch the contempt grow on the faces about him; he could not bear to see how the neighbors would file away one by one — Starr, Coleman, Greene, and the others.

It was very still. Baby moved restlessly, but aside from that there was no sound. The silence seemed interminable to Gardner — he could bear it no longer. He raised his eyes and saw the group of men and women still standing there looking at him, not contemptuously, not pityingly — but kindly, proudly.

"I don't keer 'bout them ol' times," Starr cried with vehemence. "Ye say ye wuz a coward then, but I don't agree with ye. A coward would n't ever think

o' his self ez sech, an' wut 's more, ef he did he would n't let on. Human nater is weak an' onsartin ez a rool, but it 's full o' pride, an' it keeps some truths precious close. I 'm olluz observin' an' thet 's be'n the outcome o' wut I 've seed. S'pose ye did feel trembly w'en the cannons wuz roarin'? I felt the same myself — it jes' sent col' shivers the hull length o' my backbone. Ye 're a he-ro, Ezry Gardner, an' I don't b'lieve George Washington hisself wuz a gre'ter one."

"They 're talkin' 'bout ye all over the Island," Mrs. Starr interrupted delightedly. "They telephoned into town 'bout the rescue, an' fer all it looks ez ef it would pour down ev'ry minute, lots o' folks have driven over, an' all this arternoon they've be'n goin' through the street jes' to see ware ye live. An' Mis'

Lovicy Bascom sez ye 've inspired her to write some po'try; she 's gone to work at it now. Like ez not she'll git it finished by bedtime; her idees come ez quick ez chain-lightin'. I should n't wonder ef she writ twenty varses 'bout ye savin' the perfesser. She writ fourteen on Zechariah Clisby's conversion. An' she sez herself this is a gre't occasion. The po'try 'll be in the 'Evenin' Star,' sure, an' ye must n't fergit to cut it out, an' paste it in yer Bible. I 'll make ye some flour paste."

"Up to the hotel the folks air keen to see ye," another woman chimed in as Mrs. Starr paused for lack of breath. "There 's a noospaper man there an' he wants yer picter. Hain't ye ever hed one taken? Deary me, how sing'ler! Ye 'll hev to set right away. Dawes 'll

take a fust-rate one; he olluz makes folks look so agreeable an' smilin'; he tells a heap o' funny stories to kinder keep their courage up. The noospaper man is goin' to write a story 'bout ye an' send it to Borston an' Noo York. I should n't wonder ef he said 'please copy,' so the other papers all over the world would print it. An' I do b'lieve the Queen of England will read it on her throne."

"I 've brung ye some opodeldoc lotion fer yer j'ints, Ezry," Phœbe Macy said softly as she elbowed her way up to Gardner with her offering. "It 'll limber ye up pretty smart."

"An' I thought mebbe ye would n't feel like gittin' a meal fer yerself to-night," cried Mrs. Starr again, "so I jes' left a pie an' some b'iled beans in the kitchin — ye 'll be sure to like 'em."

Gardner gazed at the friendly faces in dumb amazement, he hardly comprehended the words of kindness on every side. Only one thing was clear — they, knowing all, did not shun him. Never any more would that old, pitiful secret torment him with a multitude of vague fears. He had no secret. He had taken his little world into his confidence and his neighbors were his friends. They had met beneath his roof to honor him. What were queens on their thrones to this sovereignty of love near at hand? What were the praises from unknown lips, even though they were numbered by the thousands in those places where his story should be read, compared to this little measure of approval and goodwill from those who knew him best?

He had never experienced such hap-

piness. He was full of self-abasement and mindful of his shortcomings, but he was strangely exalted at the same time by the applause his neighbors bestowed. No touch of ignoble pride, however, marred the peace that filled his being; the pride he felt was full of gratitude for the strength that had been given him to meet the occasion. His humility was his safeguard. He did not move from his place, but leant closer against his faithful friend He was trembling with excitement and he felt stronger by her side; she seemed to share his honors, too, by her proximity.

The hum of conversation went on; the room was full of laughter that even in its heartiness had an undercurrent of sadness, as though the people, in the midst of their rejoicing, realized continu-

ally the danger which had threatened their comrade. There was something tremulous and hysterical in the little meeting; the pent-up feelings could not find a ready outlet, and trivialities crept to the surface, while the deeper emotions lay unexpressed. Suddenly, from without, there came the sound of a child's voice raised in entreaty.

"Let me in — I want to see Gardner — let me in, I say, he saved my father's life."

The crowd at the door parted to allow the boy to enter. He was a sturdy little fellow — about eight years of age — with a frank, fearless face which still bore traces of recent tears. He ran up to the old man and held out his hand.

"I guess you and Baby know me," he said confidently. "We 're not what any one

would call strangers, and I 've always thought you a tip-top man, but now I think you 're far and away the nicest person I ever met — and the bravest. My father says " — he interrupted himself with a shiver and drew the back of his hand across his eyes; for a few moments he was silent, then he went on eagerly — " I can't ever thank you, and mother can't, and father can't, but you 'll be sure we do deep down in our hearts, even if we don't find the words to say it. I 'm glad to know you, sir, and Baby, too, — she 's the dearest horse in the whole world — I 'll — I 'll — never forget you. I never knew a real hero before."

The tears brimmed over Gardner's eyes and ran down his cheeks, but he made no effort to brush them away. He took the child's hands in both of his.

"Tell yer father I wuz glad to do it,"

he whispered. "I'm powerful glad an' thankful to hev brung him back."

The next moment the boy threw his arms around the old, bowed figure and pressed his cheek against the worn, white face, then, half-ashamed of his demonstrativeness, he darted away through the open door. Once outside, he turned and shouted in a voice that could be heard the length and breadth of Cliff street:

"Hurrah for Ezry Gardner! Let 's give him three cheers and a tiger."

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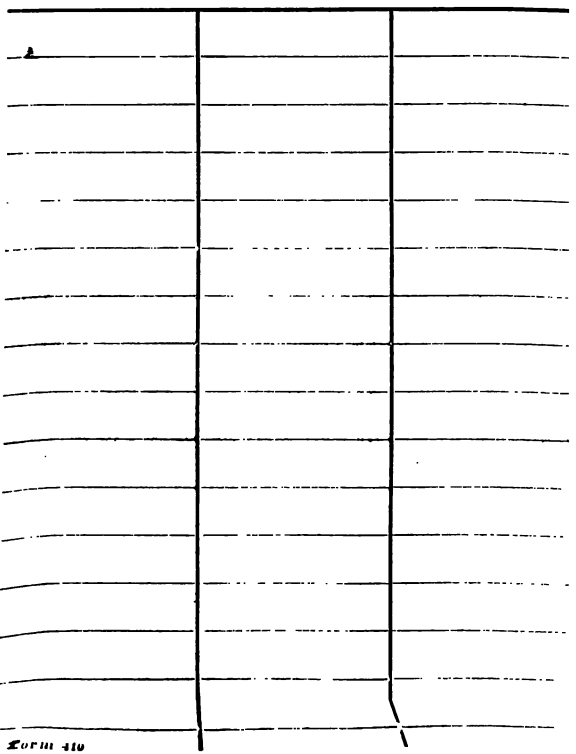
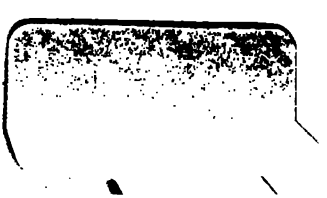
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